

Why That One – Chapter 1

“Why that one?”

“Because it looks like an American rifle. Look at the others, they don’t look like what I’ve become accustomed to an American rifle looking like. The others are boxy and can’t be made to look like an American hunting rifle. All you have to do to make that one look like an American hunting rifle is use a 5-round magazine.”

“But, it’s so expensive.”

“Most things worth having usually are. None of them sell for much under a thousand.”

“Doesn’t the same company make less expensive models?”

“Yes, they do. They have a standard model, a loaded model, a national match model, this rifle, an M21 patterned after the US Army firearm with the same designation and the M25 or White Feather, designed as a tribute to Carlos Hathcock.”

“Who?”

“He was a USMC sniper in Vietnam. The enemy offered a reward and gave him the name *Lông Trắng*, translated as ‘White Feather’, because of the white feather he kept in a band on his bush hat.”

“Anyway, what you’re telling me is that they have 3 less expensive models and only 2 more expensive models?”

“That’s right.”

“Why don’t you pick one of the less expensive models?”

“Because he has this one in stock. He checked and none of the other models are available at the moment. He said if I bought this rifle, he’d sell me the scope and mounts for 10% over his cost and install the scope. He has a laser that fits in the chamber and can sight the rifle in.”

“And how much does the total package come to?”

“Uh, in the neighborhood of five.”

“FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS! ARE YOU OUT OF YOUR MIND?”

“You don’t need to shout. You can add to that for the 20 round magazines at \$22 a pop, I want 20, a pair of 5 round hunting magazines plus the ammo.”

“And, how much is the ammo?”

“A buck a round.”

“Let me get this straight. You want to spend around \$5,000 on a rifle with a scope and after you buy it, you need to buy 22 magazines, God only knows how much ammo and probably a fancy rifle case?”

“That’s about right. After that, I’ll buy the M1911 and the 12-gauge pump.”

“Uh huh. And how much more is this going to set you back?”

“I’m not sure, pistol with extra magazines maybe \$750, the shotgun maybe \$550 not counting the .45 ammo or 12-gauge ammo.”

“You can have your rifle for all I care; I get the house and the Buick.”

“What are you saying?”

“Adios. Don’t let the door hit you on the butt on your way out.”

“But, you said I could buy a rifle.”

“I was thinking a good rifle would go for maybe \$750 and a workable scope for maybe \$250. It’s obvious now that we’re not on the same planet. At least I won’t have to listen to you nagging about storing all that extra food in the basement or building a bomb shelter. Pack your bags and hit the road. Let me know where you end up so my attorney can serve you.”

She didn’t say one more word on the drive home. I went in the house and packed my bags, putting them on the backseat of my 2001 Ford Super Duty Crewcab with the 7.3 L Power Stroke turbodiesel, six speed manual on the floor 4x4 (manual). I collected my hunting guns, a Winchester 9422 and a Remington 870 Express. She just stood there, watching to make sure I didn’t take anything she considered hers. By this point, I had decided that she didn’t have anything I wanted.

I left immediately and cleaned out the bank account, discovering that I’d thought of something she’d missed. Every penny in the checking and savings came from money I earned. While it may well be community property, I didn’t intend to hang around long enough for her to get a court order and force me to give half of it up. I returned to the dealer to pick up the rifle with the Nightforce NXS 8.5-32x56mm Mil Dot scope now mounted, a 2 gun long arm hard case, the Mossberg 590A1 and the Taurus PT1911. While she had been busy storming out to the car, I told him to get it ready. I’d already filled out the 4473 for the rifle and he added the two other guns.

That was good advice about not letting the door hit me on the butt on my way out. I filled the tanks on the truck and pointed the nose east. I stopped short of the New Mexico border and got a motel room around 11pm. Couldn't help but think about the Eagles when I passed Winslow, but I didn't stop and try to find their corner. This was a small town, Holbrook, about 50 miles east of Winslow. Sleep didn't come easy but it came, from fatigue. It had been a very long day in some respects. It did solve one problem I had; she threw me out before I tried to throw her out. The good part was that we didn't have any kids to complicate things. I wanted some and she didn't. I spent many a night on the couch after fighting about that.

The next morning I got up, did my business, showered and shaved. Then I hooked up my laptop and checked Wiki for Community Property states. I wanted to find one that wasn't and might not be receptive to California's Community Property laws. I mean, what the hell, she got the house and the Buick and her jewelry and clothes and the furniture. For good or bad, I settled on Missouri. In some ways, it turned out to be a bad choice.

My friends call me Ted. I'll be 39 on my next birthday, November 11th, Veteran's Day. The year is 2002; the year after those terrorists took out the World Trade Center and hit the Pentagon. Yes, I've seen all of those conspiracy nuts who claim Bush was behind it and that the towers came down because of demolitions. They're crackpots, but as long as they leave me alone, I'll leave them alone.

One thing I'm not so sure of is starting a war in Afghanistan. On October 7, 2001, early combat operations including a mix of strikes from land-based B-1B, B-2 and B-52 bombers; carrier-based F-14 and F/A18 fighters; and Tomahawks launched from both US and British ships and submarines signaled the start of Operation Enduring Freedom – Afghanistan. Bush addressed Congress and the nation attempting to secure support for the endeavor.

I arrived in Missouri from Tulsa on I-44 which I'd picked up in Oklahoma City. I had all of the money left from the checking and savings accounts. It wasn't really a lot, around ten grand. I looked for a furnished apartment in Springfield and finally found one, first and last plus one month as security deposit; there went a quick \$1,500. I unloaded my things into my new apartment and started perusing the want ads for construction labor. I found several ads, but realized I had a problem, I'd walked off my previous job without as much as a 'see you later'. Hence, no reference and I probably couldn't expect to start as a foreman.

What I ended up with was a job on a framing crew. The wages weren't anywhere near what I'd been earning in California; however, they paid the rent and bought my groceries. One thing that I didn't do was let her know where I was. She could get a divorce if she wanted, but I wasn't going to help her. Once I had established residency, I did the next best thing, filed for a divorce myself. All that gained her was the name of my attorney and the state where I lived. I gave the attorney a 'postal' box from one of those rent

a mailbox places. They give you a choice and I used their street address with my mailbox number as my apartment number.

In due course, the divorce was approved by the Missouri court and I was free at last, thank God Almighty, I was free at last. Kind of borrowed that from Dr. King. My attorney fees weren't that bad and the court didn't award her attorney fees. As a result, I was actually saving up a little money each month. It varied but ran from \$500 up to almost \$1,500, depending on my expenses.

It wasn't the big things that made the difference to my savings, it was an accumulation of little things. For example, when I could get a case of M118LR, I'd buy one. Or, when the vendor I used had 230gr Gold Dot had it, I bought some. In the end I had about the same amount in savings as I had when I started; I had all of those magazines and ammunition.

Preparedness breaks down into categories: air, shelter, water, food and a means of protection. During the summer of 2003, Bush had us fighting in Iraq and I was looking for a small parcel of land. I didn't want fancy, the less hospitable it looked the better. If it were sloped as many of the parcels in the area were, so much the better. A cave would be a real bonus, provided it wasn't full of snakes.

I'd spent most of the winter of 2002-2003 designing and redesigning what I wanted for a shelter. It was to be dual use, ergo, it would be both my home and my shelter. I would need a good well that produced pure water and ample room to install a septic system large enough to accommodate more than one home. The parcel could be anywhere from 5 to 10 acres, depending on price. I sort of figured, rightly or wrongly, that the less hospitable the property, the less it would cost per acre. Which naturally meant it wouldn't be on a lake.

I had picked a local realtor to keep an eye open for something meeting my description. He assigned me and the task to one of his employees by the name of Katy. Katy said she'd keep it in mind, but pieces like what I wanted didn't come on the market very often. I explained that before I committed to the purchase, I have to get a well driller to check the place out; I didn't want it if there was no water.

Every place has water, but the cost of putting in a well can be prohibitive and you can't afford the water. I checked the Yellow Pages for well drillers and found one guy in particular that included dowsing as part of his ad. I call him and he said that if he could dowse and determine the best spot for the well, he'd guarantee the output. If not, he'd drill where I wanted, but wouldn't guarantee anything except a hole in the ground, as deep as I could afford.

Katy called me in July of 2004 and told me she had a listing that seemed to meet my description and wanted to know if I was still interested. I told her yes and we made an appointment to check the parcel out on Saturday morning. I called the well driller and explained that the decision of whether or not I bought a piece of property I was looking

at on Saturday would depend on whether or not it had water and wondered if he'd be willing to ride along with his coat hangers. He said, what the hell, and the game was afoot.

The well driller, Ben, and I met at Katy's office and she suggested we take my truck since it had 4WD. The location was between Branson and the Arkansas state line and not far off highway 65. The closest community was a small town named Ridgedale. The road wasn't that good although I didn't need 4WD on the road, just on the actual property. She explained how the property came to be on the market on the way down. Once there, we looked around the 7.15 acres while Ben took his coat hangers and looked for water.

"I can guarantee a good well."

"How much an acre?"

"They're asking \$1,000, but may go lower."

"Ok, offer them \$750 and go up in \$50 increments until you have it bought. Ben I'll call you when I own the property. Where do you propose to put that well?"

"See that bluff up yonder? About ten feet down slope."

"Perfect. I don't suppose you do septic, do you?"

"Nah, my cousin Pete does septic."

"After you get the well in, have Pete contact me."

"How big of a system do you want?"

"At least big enough for 4 homes."

"It wouldn't really cost you much more to go to 8 homes; he pours the septic tanks from concrete. He has all kinds of forms he's made up for round tanks and you'd be surprised how much more sewage a tank will hold if you add one additional foot radius."

"What about the leech field?"

"PVC isn't really that expensive and he has his own Ditch Witch. His boy runs the trencher while he puts in the hole and assembles the forms. He pours the bottom and wall in one pour, removes the forms and pours the top. He uses galvanized sheet metal to support the top until it dries. Then, while he installs the leech lines, his boy digs the trench to the home site. He does good work and also pumps 'em out if they fill up. That don't happen if you don't put stuff in them you shouldn't and add bacteria monthly."

“What kind of bacteria?”

“He says to use Rid-X.”

Katy let me know that they accepted \$800 per acre or \$5,720 plus closing costs. I called Ben and told him to put in the well and to enclose the wellhead below ground where it would be accessible through a manhole cover. I also told him to extend the same size waterline past the well head for 10'. He asked about the septic and I told him that the septic line should be 55' downhill from the waterline. I would build the structure between the waterline and the septic line.

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It was 2005 before I had enough saved up to move to the next step, excavating a hole for my basement. It was really the shelter, but would be the only basement I had. I had begun thinking about building a cabin above the shelter because of all the trees I'd had to clear. The logs were stacked and seem to be dried out fairly well. As nearly as I could tell, they were short leaf pine, but I could be wrong. It didn't matter, they weren't going anywhere and that was a project for a future date.

I sort of got a deal on the excavation, the boss allowed me to borrow an excavator for two weekends. I ended up digging down 15' in the front and 20' upslope. When I had the shelter in, I leveled the soil over it to a depth of 10' and create a level place to build a log cabin in a future year. I was only out the fuel to get the excavation done and had enough in my savings to buy the concrete block, mortar and concrete. I ran the water line and septic line through a 'Y', one pair going up for the house and the other to the basement. The following month I had sand and gravel delivered, formed and poured the footings.

It was September, 2005 before I started to lay the block and nearly October when I finished. I had to quit for the year and save up the money for two truckloads of Ready-mix concrete to pour the floor and the overhead. We got busy in the early part of 2006 and I had to put off the pour until August. By then having the money wasn't a problem and I hired two concrete finishers from work to help on the pour.

That had a downside. Up to this point in time, no one besides me knew the location of what I called for their benefit, 'my storage room'. I had long suspected that there was a cave in that bluff and after 19 months of looking, had located it. It wasn't really a large hole behind the vines and I went in flashlight first. It was well that I did, there were Copperheads. I looked them up and they were Osage Copperheads, if it makes a difference. I was out of there in a New York minute, I don't like snakes.

After that, I started wearing high topped boots (Chippewa Men's 10" 'Logger' Boots) and looking before I stepped. I made sure that no copperheads had sneaked into my new 'cave' and we poured the floor and the second truck poured the overhead. I had left a doorway set back 1' from one corner on one of the end walls. I intended to dig that

space out and install stairs the following year and, if money permitted, the heavy door and air system. The nice part of building the shelter the way I'd been doing was I could locate all of the pipes where I wanted them and run electrical conduit. I wasn't sure about power at that time and ran a section of 3" schedule 40 PVC for power lines.

Despite spending what I had in 2006, I ended the year better off than any year before. Building began to slow down in 2007, but I was now on the commercial building crew and a lead worker, sort of like an assistant foreman. I realize that with my experience I should have been a foreman by now. The owner was loyal to his long term employees and I was a relative newcomer compared to some.

Anyway, I ordered the door and air system from the company in Oregon. The door had to wait until I could dig out the stairwell during the summer of 2007, all the way down to the level of the blast door. With the slowdown in overall building, I had my weekends free and had the stairwell dug out and put in over the course of a month, the air system was installed shortly thereafter. Along the way, my tongue got caught on my eyetooth and I couldn't understand what I was saying/thinking. You see, the nearest power line to my little slice of Heaven was over a mile away and the power company wouldn't run a line for free.

My choices were: generator and large fuel tank, wind turbines or PV panels. In reverse order, I didn't have a place to mount PV panels, the amount of timber cut the wind down to near nothing and a generator and tank would be expensive. Cummins had a distributor in Springfield so I went there to see if they had a good used generator. What they had was a lemon. No really, the engine had to be rebuilt and the generator head replaced. They'd sold the generator new and had to take it back under the warranty, ergo, it was a lemon. Why? A diesel generator should run for ~15,000 hours with normal maintenance.

But, the price was right, so I went to my not so friendly banker and took out a loan for half the price. Fortunately, I had the other half. Being in the construction business, you hear things and when I heard that an old gas station had been bought up to provide a portion of the space for a new office building, I checked into getting one of those tanks. First off I learned that the tanks didn't leak. Second off I learned that there were three tanks that would be sold as a set. Lastly, I learned the price of the tanks. The contractor who was in charge of demolishing the station was going to sell the tanks as scrap metal. Scrap metal sells by the ton (\$300) and the owner of the company who had suddenly taken an interest in my new home offered to stake me and to loan me the excavator to bury them.

I was thinking, "Never look a gift horse in the mouth." I should have asked what he expected in return for helping me buy those tanks. First off, he got his money back by taking a payroll deduction and leaving me just enough for rent, gas and food. Second off, he called me in his office and explained that inasmuch as he'd helped me get the tanks, he expected a place in the shelter if something really bad happened. I just about told him he could stick it but it occurred to me that it was a fair piece from Springfield to my

place and he didn't know exactly where my place was located. I kept my mouth shut. I didn't know that one of the concrete finishers had told him where my property was or I might have acted differently.

Those three 10,000-gallon tanks didn't mean much because they were empty. And diesel was priced out of sight in 2007. But, it had been a piecemeal project from the beginning. When I put in the stairs, I built a small room to the right side at the bottom to hold the generator and dug down and rerouted the schedule 40 PVC. I also routed the pipe from the empty diesel tanks to the generator and installed a cutoff valve, just in case. Just in case? Yep, just in case I get some fuel and some of that PRI-D stuff. How did I get the generator into the little room? It wasn't easy, but the hole went all the way to the surface and I borrowed a small crane from the boss. It was the getting it out part that would be hard.

I made the last payment on the generator in 2008 and decided to spend half of my available 'extra' funds on diesel. The other half would be spent on furnishing my new home. I re-plumbed the diesel pipe so I could drain fuel out of the tank into a 5 gallon can to fill my Ford. Then I gave notice on my apartment and spent a week of nights and a weekend making sure it was spanking clean. Meanwhile, I bought a cot and some surplus wool blankets. I picked up a couple of cheap oil lamps from Wal-Mart for light.

After that, I bought the fixtures and installed the bathroom but didn't bother to enclose it because I was a little short on money. It helped that I got my deposit out of the apartment and it also helped that the last month was prepaid. I next built a counter and covered it with Formica. Bought a double well sink, cut it in and hooked up the water and septic. The base of the counter was two sets of prefab drawers, one on each side and a center piece with wide double doors. After much thought, I bought a used electric stove and a used refrigerator. Stove took 220/240 but the generator would put that out with ease, it was a 32kw (prime), DGBB.

Since I had to determine before the floor was poured where everything went, the 220/240 for the stove and a gas pipe for the stove were both available. It's not uncommon to find a new home plumbed for gas for the dryer and kitchen stove and also wired with 220/240 at the same location. It factored in the cost of the home. The principal difference lay in the fact that neither the gas pipe was connected nor the wire pulled from the generator room.

I only ran the generator in the morning. Just long enough to heat the water in the 6 gallon electric water heater so I could take a shower and enough after to fix a quick breakfast. I was usually out of the door by 6:30 so I could make it to Springfield by 7:30. One day in 2009, that came to a screeching halt. How's that song go?

*Well, I guess it was back in '63,
When eatin' my cookin' got the better of me,
So I asked this little girl I was goin' with to be my wife.
Well, she said she would, so I said, 'I do'.*

*But I'da said, 'I wouldn't' if I'da just knew how sayin' 'I do'
Was gonna screw up all o' my life.*

*Well, the first few years weren't all that bad.
I'll never forget the good times we had,
'Cause I'm reminded every month when I send her the child support.
Well, it wasn't too long till the lust all died.
And I'll admit I wasn't too surprised,
The day I came home and found my suitcase sittin' out on the porch.
Well, I tried to get in, she changed the lock.
Then I found this note taped on the mailbox that said,
"Goodbye, turkey. My attorney will be in touch."
So I decided right then and there I was gonna do what's right
Give 'er her fair share but, brother,
I didn't know her share was gonna be that much.*

*She got the goldmine, (She got the goldmine,)
I got the shaft. (I got the shaft.)
They split it right down the middle,
And then they give her the better half.
Well, it all sounds sorta funny,
But it hurts too much to laugh.
She got the goldmine, I got the shaft.*

*Now listen up. You ain't heard nothin' yet.
Why, they give 'er the color television set.
Then they give 'er the house, the kids and both of the cars.
See.
Well, then they started talkin' about child support, alimony,
And the costs to the court.
Didn't take me long to figure out how far in the toilet I was.
I'm tellin' ya, they have made a mistake.
'Cause it adds up to more than this cowboy makes.
Besides, everythin' I ever had worth takin' they've already took.
While she's livin' like a queen on alimony.
I'm workin' two shifts, eatin' baloney.
Askin' myself, "Why didn't you just learn how to cook?"*

*They give her the goldmine, (She got the goldmine,)
They give me the shaft. (I got the shaft.)
They said they're splittin' it all down the middle,
But she got the better half.
Well, it all sounds mighty funny,
But it hurts too much to laugh.
She got the goldmine, I got the shaft.*

Well, she got the goldmine, (She got the goldmine,)

*I got the shaft. (I got the shaft.)
They split it all down the middle,
And then they give her the better half.
Well, I guess it all sounds funny,
(Ahh, ha ha ha)
But it hurts too much to laugh.
She got the goldmine, I got the shaft.*

*Heh, heh. Hey, Jimmy, I got the shaft.
But I don't have to worry about totin' a billfold anymore.
Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha.
I let my wife tote it.
I'm gonna be carryin' food stamps.
You get it, judge?
I'm gonna be indebted.
That's my money.
Huh?
Contempt of court?
What do you mean I'm in contempt of court? (He died 9-1-08)*

Except the song didn't apply, or did it?

"We lay off on the basis of seniority and some of you will be getting a severance check along with your regular paycheck. The economy is entering a real heavy duty recession and I don't really have a choice. There's nothing to discuss because it's strictly seniority. Anyway, I'm sorry."

When I saw two checks in my envelope, a line from the song came to me, "I'm workin' two shifts, eatin' baloney." Except I was working no shifts and baloney was about all I could afford. But, I got the money out of our accounts and bought my guns, so who got the last laugh? I had gotten 500 gallons of diesel fuel each month and more when the price fell. I had what equaled 22 months of fuel as in 11,000 gallons. I'd purchased 11,750 gallons but burned some in the Ford and used some in the generator. My purchases covered July 2007 through the end of March 2009.

I did not run the generator to keep the refrigerator cold because I didn't keep anything in the refrigerator. I usually ate oatmeal for breakfast and stopped in Branson to pick up a large cup of coffee to go. In fact, come to think of it, the refrigerator isn't even plugged in. Man, I had to find work and fast. Nobody in Branson was hiring and I went ahead and applied for unemployment. I was told 2 applications a week minimum and it was for 26 weeks. For Missourians who exhausted their regular Missouri unemployment benefits (maximum 26 weeks), you may file for Federal Emergency Unemployment Compensation (EUC) and potentially receive up to 33 weeks of additional benefits.

Why That One – Chapter 2

Nobody said how much those emergency benefits were. Once a week for the next 26 weeks, I made a trip to Springfield looking for work and not finding any. What I did manage to pick up was wood scraps and leftovers from building jobs, telling them I wanted the stuff to burn in my fireplace. I don't have a fireplace, not in my shelter, but some of those pieces of 2x4s were plenty long enough to let me enclose the bath room and one bedroom. My unemployment benefits allowed me to pay for the drywall I got at a contractor's discount and enclose the two rooms.

I bought a 5 gallon pail of paint and painted the finished drywall and that made the concrete block look awful. So, I got 2 pails of KILZ 5 gal. White Pigmented Interior/Exterior Water-Based Sealer-Primer-Stainblocker. Said it would cover 1,500ft². The block walls were 8' high, 60' on the long side and 40' on the short side. Two hundred feet long by 8 feet high equals 1,600. Hell, I had enough to do the ceiling. Not. That block soaked the sealer up like a sponge soaks up water. It took a second coat to get it reasonable looking. Don't forget the ceiling was 40'x60' long or 2,400ft². But, the concrete didn't soak it up like the block. Final tally was more like 3,200ft² plus 2,400ft² and the 4th pail was more empty than not.

I was almost having a Hannibal Smith moment, loving it when a plan came together. Of course the paint ran me \$264 plus the price of a brush and sales tax but the two oil lamps gave the large empty space a sense of hominess. And every week when I went to Springfield to look for a job, I'd check out Goodwill and other places selling discards. Once, I got a used queen size bed with mattress, box spring and frame. Another trip yielded a chest of drawers. Yet another time I got a sofa, 2 end tables and a coffee table.

My best description would be worn, but useable. My truck had a CB radio and I had a 40 channel portable. So, I kept my eye peeled for a used base station and/or a Starduster antenna. Someone must have cleaned out their attic or garage, I found a base station (you can tell, they're 110 volt) by Uniden and either a Starduster or a close copy. It took 200' of RG-8 to reach the top of Copperhead Bluff. For a bit there, I considered putting in a pair of solar panels until I saw the Copperhead. I sort of shooed it off, raised the used mast and antenna and hurried to get the guy wires in. They don't like to be shooed off. I decided to put the Alpha Delta lightning arrestor near the shelter.

That particular snake ran close to 40". The most important differences between a rattle snake and a copperhead are: copperhead has no rattles and copperhead venom is less deadly. They could use CroFab antivenin but don't usually because the risk of reactions to the antivenin exceed the risk of the venom. The scientific name of my variety was *Agkistrodon contortrix phaeogaster*.

I intended to get as much done as possible in finishing of my shelter/home. One thing I did that helped a little was to keep my tanks full and get 5 5-gallon cans of diesel every

time I went to Springfield, allowing me to add 100 additional gallons a month less the 18-20 gallons I burned in the morning over the course of a month.

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With free time on my hands, I strung a long wire antenna between the tower on the bluff and a tree nearby the shelter. I hooked up my windup AM/FM/Shortwave radio and began for the first time in years to track the news. I didn't think that McCain/Palin were the best choices, but Obama/Biden; no way. We all know how that came out. And, in retrospect, I suspect that the boss had that in mind when he cut the crews by one third.

I still was getting unemployment insurance and making the weekly trips to Springfield. One day I drove by an estate sale and decided to stop and check it out. I picked up a 4 slot toaster, a mixer and spied some things the owner was holding back.

"Excuse me Ma'am, is that ammunition going to be sold?"

"The auctioneer refused to sell it."

"Then it is for sale?"

"If I get the right price, I suppose so."

"Do you have any idea what it cost?"

"Hang on, my late husband kept the invoices in a file folder."

She came back with a file folder. The 7.62x51mm surplus was South African purchased from Aim Surplus in 2006. He'd paid \$187 per 7 battle pack case and added an additional 8 battle packs to make four full cases. He had 1,000 rounds of Speer Lawman 230gr full metal jacket and 4 cases shotgun shells, one of slugs, one of 00 buck, one of #4 buck and one of flechettes from a company in Medford, Oregon. She said the guns had been sold to a dealer to avoid legal hassles. I asked what he had and she told me a HK91, Remington LEO 870 and a surplus M1911.

I dug out the calculator I used when grocery shopping and added up the total. It came to \$1,000 for the 7.62 and an average price per case of the shotgun ammo of \$175 a case. The Speer Lawman had cost him around \$500. His total cost had been 1,000 plus 700 plus 500.

"How much would you sell all of that ammo for?"

"Do you have an offer?"

"Twelve fifty."

“That seems a little low.”

“It is actually a little low. The rifle ammo is surplus, the .45 is perfectly ok but those flechettes are illegal in some states (like California).”

“Give me \$1,500 and you have a deal.”

I had been saving for an amateur radio but the deal was too good to pass up. I gave her the \$1,500 and loaded the ammo in the back of my Ford. From my viewpoint, the shotgun ammo was free and I paid full price for the rifle and pistol ammo. Considering how difficult it had been lately to find ammo, I could probably sell the 7.62 for close to five grand. I wanted the ammo, not the money. With the unused radio money, I bought the package plus two other meters, a CD V-700 and a CD V-717.

Would I steal from little old ladies? I think that I just did, but that was most of my available money and I was the first one to ask. Most gun dealers won't buy ammo for some reason. I couldn't pass up an opportunity to double my supply of ammo and could use the surplus for practice.

I wanted to find some way to get the Copperheads out of that cave and seal it up so they couldn't get back in. Although I didn't really need the extra space, it would be a good location to store extra food when, as and if I bought some of the LTS stuff. A few of the donut shops were selling the food grade plastic pails for a dollar each. I went shopping when my next UI check came in and managed to spend \$25. Next, I ordered the larger oxygen absorbers from Walton.

When the order came in, I started shopping for beans, rice, wheat, oats and corn. I didn't have the Mylar bags, so I cleaned the pails completely clean, filled them with one kind of grain and added a pair of the larger oxygen absorbers. Each pail got a bead of silicon and the lid snapped in place. I soon realized I had a new problem, no grain grinder.

I started hitting garage sales on the weekends up in Springfield. I'd start with the ones being advertised in the paper and then drive the streets looking for more. My thought at the time was finding a grinder that someone was disposing of because they acquired a better grinder. The two best home grinders were the Diamant 525 and the Country Living Mill. However, there were a few dozen models of lesser quality and capability.

The manual Diamant 525 was imported from Poland and very, very expensive. The Country Living Mill could be had complete with motor for about the same money. I only found one and they were asking \$250 firm. It was a Wolfgang Grain Mill, made in Germany. The lady said they'd upgraded to a Diamant 525 and they were only asking half of retail. She also said that it would grind dry and oily grains and that they'd only used it a dozen times. I bought it, although handing over the cash nearly brought tears to my eyes.

But it wasn't all for naught. Her husband carried the mill to my pickup and we got to visiting. He asked where I worked and what I did for a living. I told him where I used to work and that I'd been looking unsuccessfully for another job in construction. He perked up a bit when I told him I had moved from California to Missouri a few years back and that I was a construction foreman in California.

"So, you know how to build buildings that will be earthquake resistant?"

"Well, yeah but how does that have anything to do with Missouri?"

"I've got a bid in on a contract in southeastern Missouri. That's the New Madrid Seismic Zone and the building specs require that the building withstand a 7.5 earthquake."

"Richter or Moment of Magnitude?"

"Which one is the new one?"

"Moment of Magnitude."

"That one."

"We built above code after the Northridge Quake in '94."

"And you're looking for a job?"

"Sure am."

"Tell you what; if I win the bid, you're hired as foreman on that job. If that works out, I'll make the position permanent."

"Do you build locally or all over the state?"

"With the way the building has fallen off in the past couple of years, I'm building in Oklahoma, Missouri and Arkansas. But we provide the accommodations for our crews when they're away from home. You have a wife who might object to you being gone for a long period?"

"The wife I had would have but I don't have a wife and haven't since shortly after I moved to Missouri from California."

"Wasn't a match made in Heaven?"

"Wrong direction, think heat."

"Oh, one of those."

“Yep, pretty as a picture, figure like Venus de Milos. Didn’t want kids because it would ruin her figure. She didn’t think much of my wanting to get involved in preparations. She and I went to a gun store looking for an M1A. The only one he had in stock was a Super Match and he couldn’t get any of the other models at the time. I decided I wanted it, regardless of cost. She said, I could have the rifle, but she got the house and the Buick.”

“She threw you out over a rifle?”

“Yeah. I packed up my things; it wasn’t a lot, cleaned out both bank accounts and bought the rifle, a scope, Mossberg shotgun and Taurus 1911. Cali has a ten day waiting period but the dealer was a friend and I told him I was headed east. I don’t know why, but he let me take the firearms and bug out. I arrived in Springfield 3 days later. Once I established residency, I hired an attorney and divorced her. Went out of my way to make sure she couldn’t get an address on me.”

“That’s quite the story.”

“Isn’t it? Well, a few years later I bought 7 acres down close to the Arkansas border and over time built my basement for my cabin. I have a good well and an oversized septic system. Even found a cave in a bluff, but it’s full of Copperheads. The company I worked for laid off strictly on basis of seniority and I didn’t make the cut. I’ve been on unemployment for a while now and I’m sure I probably applied to your company for a job.”

“We haven’t been hiring. But if we get this contract in Cape Girardeau, we’re going to need someone with earthquake construction experience. Have you tried removing all of the snakes and sealing the cave off?”

“I don’t like snakes. It’s some kind of aversion.”

“Tell you what, give me directions to where you live and get some kind of cover built. I’ll clear out the snakes for you if I can keep them. We’ll serve them with other things at our next Isaac Walton League dinner.”

“Never heard of it.”

“Mostly conservation oriented. We do dinners as fund raisers a few times a year.”

“If you can get all of the Copperheads out of the cave, you’re welcome to them. I saw one on the top of the bluff when I was putting in my radio antenna.”

“Amateur radio?”

“CB; haven’t had the money to buy an amateur radio yet. Did get my general license, memorized the questions and answers.”

"I may know someone with a radio for sale. It won't be cheap; it's only 5 years old and in perfect condition. He upgraded from his Kenwood to a Yaesu."

"How much do you think he'd want?"

"Just guessing, at least \$750. He sort of got himself between a rock and a hard spot when he bought the Yaesu. You'd have to get your own antenna and mast, all he's selling is the radio and accessories that go with it. Got a pad? I'll give you the directions. My name is Ted."

"Got a last name?"

"Yeah, but I rarely give it out because I'm no relation. My last name is Kennedy, Theodore Kennedy."

"But the Ted Kennedy you're no relation to is Edward Moore 'Ted' Kennedy."

"Well, good old dad didn't know that at the time. For some reason my parents didn't give me a middle name. Nobody likes to be called Theodore unless their last name is Roosevelt. So, I just go by Ted for the most part. Next Saturday ok for the snakes?"

"Perfect, I'll have time to cement or mortar a flat spot on the buff and construct a plywood door."

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That was the best news I had in a long time. There was a potential job in the offing, I'd hopefully be snake free and I had a good line on an amateur radio, the very model I'd been considering, the TS-2000. I knew where I could get the telescoping mast and had the MFJ vertical in the basement. I had a habit of getting the cart before the horse once in a while.

If I got the job, most of the money was going into diesel fuel in an attempt to fill the 2nd and 3rd tanks. My first step in securing the cave was to make a temporary plug to keep the snakes in while I prepared the rock face so I could apply mortar or concrete for that flat spot. I had some of each, actually. The only major difference between the mortar and concrete I had was the absence of aggregate in the mortar. After looking at the problem for some time, I cut back the vines, made two forms and the plug and proceeded to prep the entrance for a door. I used 1x6 boards to hold the mixture in place and added a board followed by either concrete (at the bottom) or mortar (near the top). I had driven long spikes into the rock face to hold the concrete/mortar in place. I left the forms in place until Friday and then removed them.

The concrete was dry to the touch and wasn't slipping so I attached a partial sheet of 3/4" plywood using screws and concrete anchors. Rob and two other men he introduced as Pete and Jim, removed the sheet of plywood and the plug. Some of the snakes in the

cave must have tried to get out; they were right behind the plug. They had those snake grabbers and the sticks with the hooks on the end. The snakes were put in a couple of large, heavy duty cardboard boxes in the back of Rob's pickup. I didn't watch.

"How did it go?"

"We got at least 100 snakes. Do you want a skin to make a hat band?"

"No thank you, I wouldn't want to get that close to a snake."

"I doubt we got all of the snakes on the bluff, they really blend in with their environment. I am positive that we got all the snakes from your cave."

"That's ok; did you put the plywood back up?"

"Sure did, why?"

"I'll leave it there for at least a year and starve any remaining snakes to death."

"By the way Ted, I got the contract and you should plan on being in Cape Girardeau a week from Monday. It's a minimum of 9 months but more likely a year of work. When I knew that I had the contract, I called my friend with the radio and told him I had a buyer. It cost you \$800, but I'll take it out of your pay a little at a time. You might want to get a mast, antenna and cable in for when you get the radio."

"I have the antenna and can get the RG-8. I know where to get the guyed steel telescoping mast. It will be ready to go when I get the radio."

"The radio is in the truck."

"Well, maybe it won't be ready to go when I get the radio, but all I need is the mast, guy wires and RG-8. I get on that immediately. What came with the radio?"

"Headphones and a desk mike. It has an internal speaker. Where do you live?"

"Let me show you. This pile of wood here? Fake except for the top pieces. Lift it up here and voila."

"A stairway?"

"Yeah, to my basement. That pile of logs over there is what I'm going to use to construct my cabin. When we get to the bottom of the stairs, give me a minute to fire up the gen-ny."

"This isn't a basement, it's a bomb shelter."

“When I build the cabin I intend to offset it from the shelter so the stairs open in the cabin or make the cabin longer than the shelter. It will serve as both my bomb shelter and as my basement.”

“Have you ever built a log cabin before?”

“Afraid not, it’s going to be a learning experience.”

“Maybe I can help out.”

“For a place in the shelter?”

“We have our own, thank you. It’s buried ten feet deep and is the size of our entire backyard. It’s connected to the basement via a tunnel hidden behind a cabinet. I put in septic in the front. Ours was the first home in the housing tract, that my company built, and nobody knows about the septic except me, my wife and now, you. The well was drilled inside the confines of the shelter and we could easily shelter 70 people at 100ft² per person. I’ll show it to you sometime. How big is this, 40x60?”

“You have a good eye. That little room is the ¾ bath and the larger room is my bedroom. I couldn’t afford to have power run to the site and purchased a rebuilt Cummins diesel generator. I have storage for 30,000-gallons of diesel but have somewhere between 10 and 11 thousand gallons at the moment. That used steel cabinet there is my Faraday cage. I have a long wire radio antenna connected to a portable radio. It’s pretty meager at the moment, but someday, it will be finished and my retirement home.”

“Katy was quite impressed with you.”

“Katy? The real estate agent? What does she have to do with you?”

“She’s my niece. She had hopes that you’d ask her out on a date but you never did. It took me a while to put together who you were. When I showed her the directions to your place, she beamed and said, *That’s the guy.*”

“She’s a bit younger than me.”

“How old are you?”

“I was born in ’63 and will be 46 on November 11th.”

“She’s 38 and divorced. Has been since 2003.”

“That was five years ago, she can’t still be interested in dating me.”

“You might be surprised. Her dating has been limited to movies and going out to dinner and nothing more. She said she’d find the right man and then might allow it to turn into a relationship. She tends to move slowly on things of this sort.”

“Well I’ll be darned.”

“Anyway, I asked if you’d ever built a log cabin. It isn’t as easy as you might think. You’ve got good logs cut and I presume they’re wholly dried?”

“For a long time now.”

“You’d need a few hands to build the cabin. Let’s see how this Cape Girardeau project works out and if I’m pleased, I see to it that you get your cabin erected.”

“Thank you; I don’t know what to say.”

“You just said it. You might try to check on Katy.”

“I will the next time I’m in Springfield. Don’t have a cell phone.”

“Don’t have internet either?”

“I’m afraid not. I can use the internet at the Library.”

“I see you have some LTS food.”

“Bought the pails and put it up myself with local bought grains. Scrubbed the pails out really well and didn’t use Mylar bags, just oxygen absorbers and silicon. I bought the grain grinder from you.”

“From my wife, not me. She wanted some additional things for the shelter and I told her to have a garage sale and unload the extras to get the money. She likes to buy the best and then hold onto them when she buys something better.”

“I suppose I should ask how much the job pays, not that that would make any difference.”

“You will be paid the going wage for a job superintendent not foreman, plus expenses. The accommodations will be billed directly to the company. You’re responsible for your meals but the motel has Acme Efficiency Kitchenettes with the sink, 2 burners and refrigerator.”

I dropped it even though it didn’t answer my question. I would take a sauce pan and a small frying pan and service for two of flatware and dishes. Probably find a nearby Wal-Mart and buy groceries there. Most motels these days had complementary coffee service in the room but I’d pack my percolator, just in case. I told Rob I’d look up Katy and I

had to go by the office to fill out my W-4 and all those employment forms. I figured I would kill two birds with one stone, do the forms first and stop by the real estate office and see if she remembered me.

The position was Construction Superintendent, not foreman. I got a look at what a construction superintendent earns while filling out the papers and almost had a heart attack on the spot. Plus expenses he said and I asked which expenses were paid. Mileage when I used my pickup for company business, anything that would normally be bought from petty cash (under \$100) and other expenses related to my employment. She gave me a list and welcomed me aboard.

I had lunch at a café and went to the library and got on the internet, just to kill time. It had been years since I'd been on a date, if in fact that turned out, and I wasn't really sure how to act. I decided I'd just be myself, albeit probably nervous.

"Is Katy in?"

"Yes, she's with a customer, please take a seat."

"Thank you."

"There's coffee over on that counter."

"Thank you."

I almost didn't get a cup, fearful that she'd be right out and I'd have to fumble with a half filled cup. It smelled pretty good and the wait suggested she wouldn't be right out. I walked up to the counter with a quizzical look on my face and the receptionist said, "Third door on your left down that hall."

I made room for the coffee and washed up. Next, I got a half cup of the great smelling coffee. I was just finished and thinking about getting another half cup when Katy came out.

"Ted? What brings you here? Looking for more real estate?"

"No, not really, I start next Monday as construction superintendent at the Cape Girardeau project. Your uncle suggested I stop by and say hi, so 'Hi'."

"Come back to my office, please."

"Ok."

"Just what did Uncle Rob say about me?"

Why That One – Chapter 3

“Not much really, just that you, like me, are divorced. He might have said something about my looking you up and maybe inviting you out to dinner.”

“And?”

“Uh, would you be free for dinner tonight? You know how far away I live and I don’t get to Springfield much.”

“On one condition, nothing fancy. Maybe Italian or Chinese with no dress requirements.”

“Do you have a favorite? Truth was I never ate out much when I lived in Springfield.”

“Bamboo Inn. See you at five?”

“Uh, sure. Thank you.”

The Bamboo Inn wasn’t at all expensive and average price was between \$5-10. Katy got Egg Foo Yung and I got Mongolian Beef, a favorite.

“Did you build a home on the acreage?”

“Not so far. I put in the well and septic system and then spent a couple of years putting in the basement. Rob and two friends came down this past weekend and cleared the Copperheads out of my cave. He said they’ll be including them with a dinner the Isaac Walton League is going to have.”

“I think maybe I’ll skip that. You haven’t built a home?”

“Well, home is where you hang your hat and so far that’s the basement. I have the logs cut to build a log cabin. Rob said if things worked out on the Cape Girardeau project, he’d see to it that I had help constructing the cabin.”

“Tell me a little about yourself.”

“I married in my early 20s, she was a bit of a beauty queen, but I found out beauty is only skin deep. She didn’t want kids and I did. It all came to a head over a rifle I wanted to buy.”

“Tell me about that, I assume it was expensive.”

“It was. It was a Springfield Armory Super Match and the only M1A that he had in stock. Worse, none of the less expensive models were available. When I explained what the rifle, scope, magazines and ammo would cost, she flipped out. It didn’t help that I kept

going mentioning the shotgun and pistol I wanted. She said something like, "You get the rifle and I get the house and Buick."

"We went home, I packed my bags, cleaned out the bank accounts and bought the guns. My buddy had pity on me and overlooked the 10-day waiting period. I arrived in Springfield 3 days later and got an apartment. Then, I found the job that I was working when I bought the property. Got laid off in March and have been on unemployment. Met Rob at your aunt's garage sale where I bought her old grain mill. Rob and I got to visit-ing and he discovered I was a foreman for a construction company in California. He had that project and if he won the bid, would have to find someone who knew about building earthquake resistant buildings. He got the contract and I got hired."

"How long were you married?"

"Sixteen years, age 23 to age 39."

"Did she divorce you?"

"She didn't know where I was. I waited until I met the residency requirements and hired an attorney. I didn't even give him my correct address. What about you?"

"I met him in college during my senior year. We dated off and on that year and when we graduated we both ended up in Springfield. I'm from here, he was from Rolla. He started out with a good job and I got a job here selling real estate. He did great guns for the first few years and then got a wandering eye. I didn't have a clue. I don't know how long that finally went on, but a year or two later, I started getting calls when the caller hung up. I guess I should have thought of the line from the movie, *if a woman answers, hang up.*"

"What happened next?"

"I went to work one day with an awful cold. The realtor told me to go home and get over the cold before I came back. I went home, changed in to my nightgown and robe and was drinking tea with honey and lemon when I heard the front door being unlocked. I figure maybe he had come home for something, but in walks this floozy. I asked who are you and she said this was her future home. I told her it was my home for the moment and she'd better git before I filled her butt with rock salt. I packed up his clothes and junk and set them on the front porch. He came home not long after and I told him to go sleep with his floozy."

"And he just left?"

"My father is an attorney and one of my brothers a policeman so he knew better than push it. The divorce was final in late 2003 and I've only been on a few dates since, usually a movie or dinner. I let him have the house and payment. I can't have children and we didn't have to worry about Child Support or Alimony. Alimony is compensation for

income a woman loses when she gets married and quits her job and that didn't apply to our circumstance. We had two cars so he took his and I kept mine."

"I'm a bit older than you. Is that a problem?"

"How old are you?"

"Forty five and forty six on November 11th."

"I'll be 39 on September 1st. Thank you for dinner, I really should be going."

"My pleasure. Do you have e-mail? I think the construction trailer is equipped with e-mail."

"They always are. How long will you be gone?"

"Nine months to a year. I planned on coming back occasionally to order fuel for my diesel tank."

"Here's my e-mail. Let me know when you'll be back and keep in touch."

"I will. I'll write to let you know what my e-mail address is."

What did I learn from our first 'date'? Katy was very attractive in an understated way. She has four years of college to my two. Her description of her husband got me to wondering about my ex-wife and her all too frequent headaches. I didn't dwell on it, she was ancient history. She didn't give the impression of being full of herself. I hadn't asked how long she had been married, probably ten years more or less. She was single now and that was all that counted. Would this be considered an internet romance? Probably not, that applied to people who met online. Not that there was anything wrong with that, it just didn't interest me.

I was fairly certain that the architect may not have included the proper bracing for an earthquake and since I was hired for what I knew about building quake resistant buildings, I intended to build to the latest California building code. The code I had was slightly out dated, but there hadn't been any major quakes since this edition. Every time California had a major earthquake, the building codes were updated to reflect lessons learned from that quake.

There is no such thing as an earthquake proof building, even if it sits on springs and is properly reinforced. It's all about preparing for the worst and hoping for the best and those preparations usually had budget limitations. Building from scratch and incorporating minor changes would allow us to build them as cheaply as possible and eliminate a later seismic retrofit to get them up to code.

Most of the changes would be minor, substituting plywood for construction board in certain locations. Pre-stressing at certain critical points of the wood framed buildings. It would be a motel when finished. Frame construction was a benefit because they tend to give and while the building might require repairs, the object was to protect the people inside. We also had to consider liquefaction and, of course, sand blows.

There would be 2 2-story buildings with motel rooms on either side plus a separate building holding the lobby, a coffee shop, the main dining room and kitchen. They wouldn't be serving complimentary breakfasts, but had included a room in case they changed their minds in the future. There would be 15 rooms on the upper and lower floors of both buildings for a total of 120 rooms.

It wasn't unlike several jobs I'd worked in California. Many of the changes, as I said, were minor, yet critical. They raised the cost of the motel only slightly, but Rob may have low balled his bid and every change that had to be made seemed to generate another call from Springfield. I had to explain in detail why the change had been made and how it would help to improve the earthquake resistance of the motel. I was earning every penny of the rather high salary I was being paid.

Most of the changes ended up being covered by approved change orders while a few weren't. They only amounted to a few thousand dollars on a project worth several multiples above that. Had they employed an Earthquake Engineer familiar with seismic construction, the building plans would have included the changes I was making. However, with New Madrid, Missouri just a few miles away, I risked it all and was unyielding.

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Katy and I began exchanging e-mails and getting to know each other long distance. I'd get back to Springfield about every other month and we'd do dinner, a movie or something. She was growing on me and me on her. She agreed to take over getting my diesel tanks filled and stabilized. It seems that she knew all about fuel stabilizers. I shouldn't have been surprised; it appeared that the entire family was into preparedness. Rob had a buy-in of sorts, family members had to supply their own LTS food at the rate of 2 years per person, a MBR, pistol and shotgun per person and maintain personal supplies and clothing in the shelter.

Katy confessed that she preferred jeans when she wasn't working and her casual ensemble was made up entirely of western clothing. She had two Tennessee Walking Horses put up at a stable on the outskirts of Springfield. They were relatively recent acquisitions and were both 5 year old geldings. She told me that her MBR was an M1A National Match, her shotgun was an 870 police model with 18" barrel plus ghost ring sights and her pistol was a Para Ordinance P-14. She had a CCW and carried a Warthawg, her backup pistol, always. She had a Galco purse with the pistol compartment and carried 2 spare magazines although she had a grand total of 5 (4 spares).

I repeated the story of my firearms acquisitions and gave her more details; like my rifle was the same action used in the M21 and had a very high quality scope. My shotgun had a 20" barrel and was a 9 shot and my pistol was a concession to price vs. quality, but the quality was pretty good. I also explained my initial ammo purchase and me robbing the little old lady blind. She said I should be ashamed of myself. I agreed, but said that's all the money I had at the time, my radio money.

After seeing each other off and on for about 6 months, she gave me a goodnight kiss when I dropped her off at her apartment. I took that to mean that she was interested, based on what Rob had said six months earlier. To be honest, I had been interested since our first 'date'. Given that we'd both been married before and the marriages hadn't worked out, we weren't hurrying.

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Eventually the job was completed, inspected and turned over to the client. I headed home, anxious to check on my property and Katy. However, before I could do so, Rob wanted to see me in his office.

"This was a very profitable job Ted. You probably think I low balled my bid, but I didn't. The only change orders they didn't approve were really minor changes and the company made out big time on this project. It should help us get more of those earthquake resistant building jobs when they come up. I wanted to thank you for a magnificent job and to give you this bonus in person, you earned it."

"I don't know what to say, thank you."

"I'd like you to stay with the company as a Construction Superintendent in our industrial construction division. It's a management position and not subject to seniority. The salary will be the same as you've been earning. Starting next week, I'll have a crew down at your property to erect the log cabin. We're going to put up a small barn if there're enough logs."

"A barn? Why would I want a barn?"

"Well, in case you get any livestock, like horses for example. You might decide to get a feeder beef or hog; who knows? We had a little free time and did some work in your basement using material left over from a job or two. We also mounted a 30kw wind turbine on top of that bluff. Based on output, you do have enough wind. Finally, we cut down a few more trees to open up the cabin area a little and you won't have a problem if you decide to install PV panels and a battery bank. Report to work on Wednesday of next week, you have vacation and sick leave accumulated but these two days won't be charged against your vacation."

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“Hi, can you get free for coffee?”

“Oh, Ted. I don’t have anything the rest of the day; when and where?”

“How about that café across from where you work in ten minutes?”

“I’ll be there waiting.”

“Hey you.”

“Hey yourself. I’ve got good news and bad news. Your tanks are full but it took 19,500 gallons at \$2.65 a gallon average plus the stabilizers. I spent \$52,000 of your earnings and it doesn’t leave you with much.”

“Your uncle paid me a rather large bonus and hired me permanently, that won’t be a problem. He said that next week they’ll start construction on my cabin and a barn. He also said something about doing additional work on my basement.”

“I’m afraid I was involved in that. Not only is your basement finished off, it’s furnished a bit better than before. I spent a bit more of your money and bought a spare set of filters for your air purifier, a pre-filter, a carbon filter and a HEPA filter. You also have more food than 25 pails of grain.”

“Wow, good thinking. So the shelter is complete?”

“Well, I didn’t buy a gun safe but did put in a locking cabinet with a rifle rack and a shelf to hold handguns.”

“You’ve really grown on me over the past year.”

“Are you proposing?”

“I wasn’t but I’ll have to admit I’ve thought about it more than once.”

“I accept.”

“Are you sure?”

“Positive. Why wait? We can drive to Miami, Oklahoma and get married the same day. It’s on I-44 a little over an hour away.”

“You don’t want the large wedding?”

“I had the large wedding and don’t want to go through that again.”

“Do you want to drive down tomorrow?”

“I guess I can stand to wait one day. Besides you do look like you need a good night’s sleep.”

“What about rings?”

“We’ll buy plain gold bands tomorrow before we leave.”

For a moment, I felt like I’d been setup. However, I had planned on proposing so let it lie.

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That is how Katy and I became husband and wife. It also explained the barn, Katy had those two horses. On his own, Rob decided to lengthen the cabin rather than offset it and the stairs were up against one end wall of the cabin. The floor was cut out with a hydraulic assist cylinder so anyone could raise the cover to the stairwell and eyehooks so it could be locked once you were inside. His wedding gift was construction of the cabin and barn. Her parents wedding gift was the furnishings. There were two bedrooms with separate baths, a master bedroom and a guest room. You do recall that Katy couldn’t have children?

After all of the construction was completed and the home furnished, Rob checked the cave for Copperheads and found none. I was now working on a slightly smaller project right there in Springfield, a commercial building. Katy quit her job and became a homemaker. I soon found out that I either had to exercise or gain weight, she was an outstanding cook. I cut back on my portions and started to jog, do pull-ups, push-ups and sit-ups. I gradually increased the exercise count to 100 push-ups and sit-ups and as many pull-ups as I could manage with a minimum of 25. My jogging started out with a mile run due to the hilly country and eventually built up to 3 miles.

I didn’t actually lose any weight, but the flab became muscle and had I been a soldier, one might have described me as a lean, mean fighting machine. Katy started me out slowly and taught me to ride. We started with the walk, moved to the fast walk and finally to the canter. Her horses hadn’t been trained to gallop. Katy explained that a shortened gallop was a canter and a lengthened canter a gallop and her trainer recommended against training her horses to gallop.

I was making the most money I had made at any time in my life and we began to acquire PV panels and install them on the roof of the cabin. We discussed the situation and decided that once we had the PV panels on the cabin, we’d buy some batteries, a charge controller and additional inverters. We would continue down that path until we could store a full 12 hours’ worth of electricity in the batteries and invert it into 30kw for 12 hours. Between the wind turbine and the PV panels we wouldn’t be short on electricity.

“We should get more batteries and increase our power storage to 24 hours at 30kw.”

“If you want, but remember those gel cells are expensive and take up quite a bit of room.”

“It’s not like we can’t afford it. Well, whatever you decide will be fine with me, you’re the wage earner.”

“If you can figure out where to place them, I’ll go along with your suggestion Katy.”

“I’ll work on it.”

We ended up with a battery bank in the barn of all places. There were 6 horse stalls and 2 horses so naturally... It actually turned out to be fewer batteries than I had imagined but I’d gotten a good deal on a quantity purchase and we ended up with 30kw for 36 hours.

Up to this point in time, Rob had been lucky or very skillful in making his bids and we still had work. Still, building continued to slow and eventually he didn’t have a single project going.

“I can’t tell you how much I hate this Ted what with you being a member of the family. We don’t have a single job going and the future doesn’t look very bright.”

“I pretty much had it figured out that you would have to cut staff. Katy and I talked about it and she tried to get her job back with the realtor. Business is so slow, he’s laying off. Don’t worry about it; just promise me that you’ll consider hiring me as a carpenter or something if you get a job.”

“I guarantee that. This thing about all those countries calling in the US debt has me worried. There is no way the US can pay that debt; they don’t even have enough gold in Fort Knox. The gold in the New York Federal Reserve vault doesn’t belong to the US.”

“We have a lot of gold in Fort Knox.”

“Regardless, we have a few billion in Fort Knox and owe a few trillion. It doesn’t bode well for the future of this country.”

“I looked it up a while back and there are 147.4 million troy ounces of gold in Fort Knox and gold is above \$1,000 an ounce. That makes the value \$147.4 billion. That’s probably less than 10% of our debt.”

“More like 3-4%. Do you have any gold holdings?”

“Not much gold. I do have a few rolls of the 90% silver coins. Our gold holdings are limited to the Krugerrands Katy has.”

“I can do one of two things, lay you off or keep you on board at the minimum wage. Your choice.”

“If you lay me off, I can get unemployment insurance, let’s go that way. Then, if you do get a job, hire me back.”

“We give one month severance for every year you worked so you’ll get your final check and two months’ severance.”

“Katy and I can stretch that a long ways, especially since we have those grains and things put up. She’s doing a large garden this year too. We bought the canner shortly after we married and have been hitting garage sales and the like collecting Mason jars. We had to order a case of both regular and wide mouth lids from that place in Utah.”

“How are you fixed on jars? I’m sure we have extra.”

“Sort them out and give us a call on our cell phone. We’ve really come up in the world with having power. Got satellite TV and internet. That new cell tower they put in finally gave us communications, four bars most of the time.”

It took about an hour to get my checks cut and I took them to the company’s bank and cashed them. Next, I went to our bank and stripped our accounts to minimum balances. We didn’t have any outstanding checks, but they held back a little in case we did. It would be available in ten days.

“You’re home early, something up?”

“I told you how Rob didn’t have any jobs lined up? He called me into his office and went over my options. I opted to take a lay-off and go on unemployment. He paid me my salary plus two months’ severance and I cashed the checks and cleaned out our bank accounts. He said they should have some extra jars and he will call us when he knows how many.”

“What are we going to do?”

“Unemployment insurance isn’t that bad, especially with your garden and the price of things like bulk grains, beans and rice. We have a grain mill, roller and a flaker. We have 4 hogs we’re feeding out and two beef. We won’t go hungry and we can cut off the satellite TV and internet if it becomes necessary. Maybe I can find a little cash work to add to our food supplies and the hay and grain for the animals.”

“I’ve been afraid this would happen.”

“I’ve been unemployed before and may be again; at the moment, it’s not a big deal, we’ll switch to the pioneer lifestyle.”

“What do you mean switch to? I had to laugh when I saw you with the single bottom walk behind plow plowing the garden.”

“It’s a good thing your horses were trained to harness and you had two sets of harness. I had no idea that the ground in that spot had so many rocks. I spent as much time picking up rocks as I did plowing.”

“That plow is an antique; it was one of the first 10,000 John Deere made. I was lucky to find it. Sorry I could only find a short straight disk and small drag, but they’re about right for our garden.”

“Do you need help with anything? Canning? Hoeing the garden?”

“Let’s go riding. You saddle the horses. I bought us presents and now is as good of a time as any to start using them.”

“What did you buy?”

“You’ll see.”

I didn’t remember the saddles having rifle scabbards but there they were and I began to wonder if she’d purchased lever action rifles. I should have thought about it a bit more, a lever action rifle fairly demands a single action revolver. I saddled the horses and walked them up to the log cabin. I tied them off on the hitching rail and went into the cabin.

“Here.”

“What’s this?”

“A used Ruger Vaquero in .45 Colt. Here, take this, it’s your Marlin rifle in .45-70. It’s the model 1895 Cowboy so get your cowboy hat.”

“I don’t have a cowboy hat.”

“Sure you do, look in the hall closet and bring mine while you’re at it.”

“Here you go.”

“Well, are you going to change?”

“Change what?”

“Into jeans. And wear one of those new shirts I bought you.”

Why That One – Chapter 4

She had gotten me a complete outfit, boots, belt, shirts and hat. The boots were a bit tight and when I mentioned it, she said they'd break in. They were the 13" Harness Boot - Tan Crazyhorse. The belt was an ordinary 1¼" belt with a large buckle containing a cat's eye (quartz, not cymophane). The shirts were Wrangler's long sleeve twill work shirts and the jeans were Wrangler slim fit prewashed. I started to say something, but she beat me to it.

"I've had these things put up for months and was waiting for Christmas. So I don't want to hear any complaints about what I spent. I used my money from my bank account."

"Yes dear. Do you have ammo?"

"The rifle and revolvers are loaded, the cartridge belt is full and there are more .45-70 rounds in the saddlebags. Oh, I didn't chamber a round in the rifles."

So, we went riding, all the way south to the border before we turned around and headed home. If I were to guess, Ridgedale was about one kilometer north of the border. Ridgedale is an unincorporated community in southern Taney County. It lies about ten miles south of Branson on US 65 near the Arkansas state line. Several homes, a few businesses, and a post office are located there. We stopped and got a soda, I held the horses while she went inside.

It was obvious from the outset that marrying Katy would leave me childless, the first one didn't want kids and Katy couldn't have any. A man really has a yen for a namesake, son or daughter, but most want a son. If you're an only child, as I was, the bloodline ends without that son or daughter. The name can continue, if you adopt, but it's difficult for people our age to do that.

Once home, Katy picked some leaf lettuce for a salad and put Russets in the Microwave. I fired up the gas grill and cooked the two club steaks to a near perfect medium. The club steak is the first cut of the loin of the rear quarter of a beef and occurs before the T-bone steak. By way of comparison, if the butcher cuts the loin from the bone and cuts that boneless portion into steaks, they're called New York Strips.

Some butchers do that, ending up with the loin, tenderloin and the ribs. They sell the tenderloin (filet mignon) for an outrageous price, the New York strips for a high price and the ribs with a little meat left attached at an outrageous price, if you consider how little meat you're getting. It's probably 90% bone and priced like ground beef. Whatever they charge for the beef ribs, is pure profit. If they didn't sell the ribs, they'd be boned out and the meat used to make ground beef.

Katy and I had a lot of food, but not an unlimited amount. After we ate, she sat down and began to develop menus based on our LTS foods. Wheat would yield flour, corn would yield corn flour and/or corn meal. The combination of beans and rice would pro-

duce a fair amount of protein and carbohydrates. The next day, she boiled potatoes for potato salad and kept the water to make a sourdough starter. While we had a jar of yeast in the refrigerator, she only used a small amount and used various flours with the potato water to get the starter going.

Realizing that it might be some time before Rob called me back to work, I concentrated on buying hay and grain for the livestock. It had an upside in that some of the grains, corn and oats, could be used for human consumption. I made a trip to an elevator that had wheat and bought a half ton. We carefully cleaned it and stored it in more of the 5 gallon pails sealed with silicon. We also stored 5 more pails each of corn and oats.

“What are we going to do if something bad happens, Ted?”

“Katy we have the shelter to protect us from tornados, biological and chemical weapons and even radiation. We’ll stick with a simple menu and can hold out for as long as it takes.”

“But I’m worried about the horses and other livestock.”

“Want do you want me to do?”

“Could we buy surplus sandbags and cover the barn in a few layers?”

“I had to have sand hauled in when I built the basement.”

“You forget Uncle Rob. I can have a truckload of sand and 1,000 bags here within 2 hours.”

“Will you hold them open while I fill them?”

“Of course. I’ll even carry a few but I haven’t been working out like you have so you’ll end up doing the lion’s share of the work.”

“How many layers do you want?”

“Three should be a good start. We’ll have to divide our time among you looking for a job, canning the output from the garden and filling sandbags so we aren’t going to have a lot of free time on our hands. Hang on while I call Uncle Rob.”

“He said we’d have the load of sand and burlap military surplus sandbags in about 4 hours. They have the canning jars sorted out and we need to drive up to Springfield to pick them up.”

“It will be a good time for me to put in my two job applications for the week and cash the UI check.”

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One month later...

“That finishes the garden until it’s time to dig the potatoes and pull the onions. We might as well leave the squash and do it all at once.”

“You need to call your uncle and get more sand and bags, I think we underestimated how many bags and how much sand it would take.”

“I think we’d better drive to Springfield and talk to him. I got the impression that we might need to pay if we need more.”

“Great, I’ll go job hunting while we’re there.”

“Have any of the companies contacted you?”

“Not one. We are in better shape financially than we were when Rob let me go. We cut off the two of the three bills we had, the TV and the Internet. The generator only runs on its weekly cycle for 15 minutes so we’re not out much fuel. With this menu you came up with we’re eating as well as if not better than we did before.”

“Ok, you look for jobs and I’ll talk to my uncle about the sand and bags. I’ll see if I can talk him into free sand if we pay for the bags.”

“How much are the bags?”

“If you buy them individually \$1 each but he buys them by the pallet and I think he pays less than half of that. If you’d rather, we can get the plastic bags from him, they’re cheap.”

“I don’t know much about sandbags, you do what you think is right.”

I put in two more job applications and picked up Katy at the construction office. She was in with Rob and I was directed to join her.

“Hey stranger, find a job yet?”

“I wish.”

“From what Katy says, it sounds like you’re doing pretty well. I’ll give you the sand but the bags will run you \$530 per thousand. Take that many and bring back what you don’t use. You can pay for what you used then.”

“Thank you.”

“Katy said you cut the TV and Internet.”

“We had to keep the cell phone so people could call if they had a job offer.”

“You know you can keep up with the news just by listening to the hams talk, don’t you?”

“I hadn’t thought of that. We start doing that.”

“I take it you’re not up to date on the news.”

“We’re not.”

“Those countries called the US debt. So far the government is refusing to pay. I’d stay close to home if I were you; it’s going to turn ugly.”

“What do you think they will do?”

“Oh, they’ve already started. They’ve pulled all of our troops out of Afghanistan and over half out of Iraq. The speculation is that once they finish that, they’ll start recalling our troops from all over the world. The US spends millions if not billions in some of the countries where we have troops stationed. The speculators say that pulling our troops will hurt them worse than our not paying off our debt. With what they save on military spending, they can begin to retire that debt.”

“How?”

“Troops deployed to certain areas get higher pay than those at home. Plus they may cut back on the military by cutting out reenlistment bonuses.”

At this point in the conversation, I realized that we were using they to refer to both the foreign countries and our own government. If the foreign countries weren’t able to collect the debt, they would have two choices, wait to be paid or invade and grab our resources in an effort to collect. Should they choose the latter, we’d be fighting the first land battle on the North American Continent since the Indian Wars in the late 19th Century. It was during the period after the Civil War and before WW I that the US became the most powerful industrialized nation on Earth.

The Allies had won both WWI and WWII. In part because of our industrial base and in part because of the power of our military, we expanded our power and ultimately became the world’s policeman. When we developed nuclear weapons, we opened a can of worms. The Soviet Union had our weapons program under its watchful eye and Stalin knew about the successful Trinity test about the same time Truman knew. It didn’t take the USSR very long to develop their own nuclear weapons and they actually exploded the largest nuclear weapon ever, a 50mT device, Tsar Bomba, which had been dropped from a TU-95V and detonated at an altitude of 2.6 miles, ~14,000’.

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“We’re going to work from dawn to dusk and get these three layers of sandbags in place. I think we should consider putting three layers in the hay loft too.”

“What about the hay?”

“We’ll move it down into the barn. I sure wish we had a way to get from the basement to the barn.”

“What would it take?”

“A smooth culvert of some kind connecting the barn and the shelter with a 90° turn to prevent radiation from getting into the shelter. Some kind of door to prevent air flow through the culvert. Maybe a mechanic’s creeper to lie on and a rope or two so a person could pull themselves to the turn, switch creepers and pull them to the barn.”

“You do the sandbags and I’ll take care of the rest.”

“What are you going to do?”

“Talk to Daddy and Uncle Rob and make it happen, that’s what.”

“We can’t impose on them that much.”

“Maybe you can’t, but I sure can. Besides, I have to get my two year supply of things from Rob’s shelter and put them in ours.”

“Going to be hard to fill sandbags by myself.”

“Go ahead and move the hay down from the loft, you can do that by yourself.”

Katy was gone 4 hours and when she got back, she was leading a convoy that had a tractor with a backhoe and a truck with 30” concrete culvert sections. She had her personal firearms and supplies from Rob’s shelter along with her 2 year food supply. Several of the remaining employees came along and Rob supervised filling and stacking the sandbags both inside the loft and outside. At the same time, he had the backhoe digging a 40” wide ditch for the culvert and lowering the sections in place using a truck mounted crane. I helped Katy move everything from my Ford to the basement/shelter.

“Do you really think it’s this urgent Rob?”

“China has repositioned its troops across from Taiwan with landing ships to move them across the Taiwan Straits. During the last 24 hours, North Korean troops have begun to take position along the DMZ.”

“But, we have troops there.”

“The operative word is HAD not have. MSM is now reporting that as soon as our troops were removed from Afghanistan, ships were deployed to pull our troops from South Korea. That operation has been completed and 90% of our troops are out of Iraq. Apparently, Obama ordered a drawdown from Europe, leaving only a few NATO advisers.”

“What are we doing about the Chinese?”

“We issued a strong protest and called for a meeting of the UN Security Council. Meanwhile, Fox News was broadcasting pictures of Carrier Strike Groups leaving port. It wouldn't surprise me a bit to learn that the Seawolf class subs have been relocated to the Pacific along with the Virginia class subs. They would be perfect choices for the Taiwan Straits.”

“We were just talking about the countries calling our debt the other day.”

“That was then and this is now. Hold on. Make that 90° turn right there, if you would.”

“How do you propose to close off the tunnel?”

“I thought we'd put a counterbalanced heavy cover in the barn where the tunnel comes up. We're going to cut a hole in the concrete floor a bit oversized and dig down to the level of the culvert and then install the 90° piece followed by the upright pieces. Then, they'll dig in the direction of the culvert while those in the culvert dig towards that section we'll drag the culvert sections forward and mate up with the barn section and fill in between. I only brought one creeper and two hanks of clothesline rope. The barn cover will be close to the wall and out of the way.”

“I can't tell you how much we appreciate this Rob.”

“Well, Katy is my only niece and as such is my favorite niece. Besides, my brother is covering the cost of the materials and I'm paying the labor. We have her brothers out and about loading up on additional supplies for the shelter. My kids are helping them and by nightfall, we'll be ready come what may.”

“It won't be right away will it?”

“I doubt it. The only carrier strike group we had in the area was the Washington, with the Reagan a day away. The Washington and Reagan will rendezvous before approaching the area. That should give our subs a chance to get in place. We have two more CSGs steaming that way, but it will be a week before they arrive because the ships will fall apart if they move at flank speed for very long.”

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Flank speed is a nautical term referring to a ship's true maximum speed, beyond the speed that can be reached by traveling at full speed. Usually, flank speed is reserved for situations in which a ship finds itself in imminent danger, such as coming under attack by aircraft. Flank speed is very fuel-inefficient and often unsustainable because of engine overheating issues.

By way of example, the specification for the Littoral combat ship states that the most economic speed of this LCS is 20 knots (37 km/h; 23 mph) giving a range of 4,300 nautical miles (8,000 km; 4,900 mi). This ship has a flank speed of 50 knots (93 km/h; 58 mph) but can only go 1,500 nautical miles (2,800 km; 1,700 mi) at this speed. Thus, its "flank speed" consumes fuel over three times faster than "standard speed".

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"Do the Cruisers and Destroyers carry enough fuel to move very fast? They're both turbines, aren't they?"

"They are both based on the Spruance Destroyer hull. The DDGs have more shaft horsepower from their turbines than the CGs."

"I just hope we have enough of everything. I have as much livestock feed as we can store without using the hay loft. Our freezer is full although it's not one of those huge 25ft³ chest types."

"How big is it?"

"About 14ft³ and it's an upright."

"You do have a lot of LTS food, don't you?"

"All that I put up and I added more of the basics. I can't say we have everything that I'd like to have, but compared to most, we're pretty well off. Is Katy good with her firearms? I wouldn't think a person would have a National Match rifle unless they could shoot well."

"You have a M1A if I'm not mistaken."

"Yes, one step up, the Super Match."

"Are you as good as the rifle?"

"With enough practice I could be."

"Before she got married to you, Katy practiced every other Saturday. When you two got married, she left her firearms, except for her Warthawg, in my shelter. It's been a while

since she's practiced. I doubt it would take her long to get back up to speed. You have some time before this situation with China is resolved, why don't you both practice?"

"Her rifle has a 1:11 twist rate, right?"

"Yes and a medium weight air gauged barrel."

"That means she probably shoots 168gr ammo. I shoot the M118LR, 175gr ammo, because I have a heavy weight barrel and a 1:10 twist rate. The only other ammo I have is some of the South African surplus."

"She has her own, didn't you unload it?"

"Not me."

"It's not in the back of your truck so someone else must have unloaded it. She had ten cases of the Black Hills 168gr Match BTHP and two cases of the 168gr Hornady A-MAX."

"Katy, did someone unload your ammo?"

"No, it's still in the back seat. The food and everything else took up all the space in the box. It's under my clothes."

"I'll get the appliance cart and move it"

"Leave one case of the Match HP out, I need to practice."

"You won't need a whole case surely."

"No silly, the case contains 20 round boxes and the magazines hold 20 rounds so I'll pull out 20 boxes and load half my magazines. When we're done, I'll reload whatever I shoot up."

"CMI?"

"Huh?"

"CMI magazines?"

"New USGI."

"That would make them CMI if they were made recently. They're stamped on the back,"

"I'll look when I get the chance. What brand of magazines do you have?"

“Check Mate Industries.”

“Oh, something different?”

“No, they’re CMI. Don’t cost much more than those T-57s some people sell. If you have 40 and I have 20, then we have 30 apiece.”

Picky, picky, picky. A person could have fun with word games. Checkmate Industries was abbreviated CMI and for the extra \$6 or \$7 the magazines cost, were worth every penny. Maybe those T-57s were ok, but why put a cheap magazine in an expensive rifle? These were the magazines that Springfield Armory gouged you \$49.99 for.

“You didn’t need to embarrass me in front of Uncle Rob.”

“I’m sorry, I was just teasing.”

“Please don’t do it again.”

“I won’t, I promise. If your magazines had been USGI but made in the 1950s or 1960s, they could have been one of several brands.”

“They were new when I got them and I was told recently manufactured. I’ll check them but I’m sure they’re probably CMI.”

“Anyway you and I use different ammo. You have that Black Hills 168gr ammo while I only use 175gr M118LR.”

“Can’t I shoot the ammo you use?”

“I think that I can shoot the ammo you use but you shouldn’t use the ammo I do.”

“Why not?”

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“The rate of rifling twist determines the optimum bullet weight for a given caliber and speed of the bullet by applying the proper spin on the bullet to prevent the bullet from yawing and pitching.

“Expressed in terms of the number of revolutions per inch of barrel length, this ratio is commonly expressed by designations such as 1:10, 1/10 or 1 in 10 twist, the 1 represents 1 twist, the 10 represents inches of barrel length.

“So, a 1 in 10 twist is 1 complete bullet revolution every 10 inches of barrel length traveled.

“A good rule of thumb is that the heavier and longer a bullet is, the faster the rifling twist rate needs to be to stabilize it in flight, therefore a lighter shorter bullet needs a slower rifling twist rate to give proper bullet spin for correct flight.

“If an insufficient twist rate is used, the bullet will begin to yaw and then tumble; this is usually seen as ‘keyholing’, where bullets leave elongated holes in the target as they strike at an angle.

“Once the bullet starts to yaw, any hope of accuracy is lost, as the bullet will begin to veer off in random directions.

“A too-high rate of twist can also cause problems. The excessive twist can cause accelerated barrel wear, and in high velocity bullets an excessive twist can cause bullets to literally tear themselves apart under the centrifugal force.

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“So, what does that mean?”

“We’ll have to test fire each other’s ammo. I think that 1:11 is probably about right for the bullet weight you’re using and since I’m using a heavier bullet, I need the 1:10. We also have that surplus I stole from the little old lady and can probably both use it in a pinch.”

“How much rifle ammo do you have?”

“I have ten thousand rounds.”

“I have six thousand; we can fight a pretty big war.”

“Let’s hope it never comes to that.”

“Dad and Uncle Rob are pretty upset. That’s why I didn’t have any trouble getting them to drive down here and put in that culvert between the basement and the barn. Uncle Rob said you have some junk silver. I don’t have any of that, but I do have my Kruger-rands. I have 36 of the full ounce coins and no fractional. How much silver do you have?”

“Not that much, \$200 face value each of dimes, quarters and halves.”

Why That One – Chapter 5

“I checked the market the other day. Right now, junk silver is worth 12 times face value. So, if you have \$600 face value total, it’s worth about \$7,200. With my Krugerrands being worth about \$1,000 each we should be ok if something does happen.”

“I’m not all that concerned about having money if something happens; I’m more interested in our ability to disappear so we won’t be bothered. I think we can drop a few trees across the access road and be okay.”

“Do you have a chainsaw?”

“I used it to drop most of the trees used to build this cabin. It’s a Husky 450 with a 20” cutter bar. I like it because it has a lot of power. It’s their in-between model, not quite professional but Heavy Duty, frequent use or occasional demanding use. It won’t be a problem to drop a few trees across the road with that.”

“How much gasoline do we have?”

“Five hundred, stabilized but we’ll use my pickup. Were you asking something else?”

“I was wondering about gas for the chainsaw.”

“I have one spare chain and enough oil for the gas and the chain. Our heat is wood and we have enough of that for the moment. Both stoves are electric as are the refrigerators and freezer. You know as well as I do that we have 3 sources of electricity and using the generator will be our last choice.”

“Do you have a plan if the worst happens?”

“It would take some time before we got fallout. It shouldn’t take you more than a few minutes to get the animals out of the corral and into the barn. I’d take the chainsaw and drop some interlocking trees across the road and come back and move the sandbags into the door while you’re moving things from upstairs to the basement. Whoever finished first would hook up the radiation equipment and the last one down the stairs would lock the cover in place. I read a story once, *If You Don’t Like The Weather* and they constructed an abatis. That’s a rampart made of felled trees placed so that their bent or sharpened branches face out toward the enemy. Three or four trees should do in the beginning. We’ll have to find a way around later. However, time is on our side.”

“I’ve heard that before.”

“It’s a Rolling ‘Stones song used in the movie *Fallen*.”

*Time is on my side, yes it is
Time is on my side, yes it is*

*Now you always say
That you want to be free
But you'll come running back (said you would baby)
You'll come running back (I said so many times before)
You'll come running back to me*

*Oh, time is on my side, yes it is
Time is on my side, yes it is*

*You're searching for good times
But just wait and see
You'll come running back (I won't have to worry no more)
You'll come running back (spend the rest of my life with you, baby)
You'll come running back to me*

*Go ahead, go ahead and light up the town
And baby, do everything your heart desires
Remember, I'll always be around
And I know, I know
Like I told you so many times before
You're gonna come back, baby
'Cause I know
You're gonna come back knocking
Yeah, knocking right on my door
Yes, yes!*

*Well, time is on my side, yes it is
Time is on my side, yes it is*

*'Cause I got the real love
The kind that you need
You'll come running back (said you would, baby)
You'll come running back (I always said you would)
You'll come running back, to me
Yes time, time, time is on my side, yes it is
Time, time, time is on my side, yes it is
Oh, time, time, time is on my side, yes it is
I said, time, time, time is on my side, yes it is
Oh, time, time, time is on my side
Yeah, time, time, time is on my side*

"Who was in the Movie?"

"Denzel Washington."

“He was cop and there was some unknown evil force moving from body to body?”

“Yeah, allowed himself to die hoping to trap the evil in his body, but a fox came along.”

“Where did you stack my .308 ammo?”

“Next to the basement stairs.”

“What are we going to do for a range?”

“We could set up by the road and mark off 500 meters downslope from the bluff. Distance won't be exact, but it could be close enough. Remember when you're shooting upslope and downslope the distance for the bullet path is more than the gravitation path for the same bullet and either way, you'll hit high.”

“How do we compensate for that?”

“Are you familiar with right triangles? C squared is equal to the sum of A squared plus B squared. Since we'll know C, the physical distance from the target to our shooting spot and we can get a good idea of the increase of the elevation, if we square the physical distance and subtract the square of the increase in elevation and calculate the square root of the result so we know the gravitational distance. I bought the calculator to help with the calculations. The Pythagorean Theorem states that $C^2 = A^2 + B^2$.”

“So what you're trying to explain that we're using two guesses to calculate the third?”

“Isn't that what I just said?” 500, 40

We placed a target at the bluff and stepped off 200 30” paces or 500'. At the top before we began I picked a spot on a tree across the road. Since the bullseye was at eye level. I climbed the tree and allowed my 100' tape to unspool, giving me an approximate increase in elevation of 40'. A squared equaled 250,000, B squared equaled 1,600. Therefore the gravitational distance was the square root of 250,000-1,600 or 498 feet. Katy cranked in the correct number clicks for 166 yards.

Her hit was in the nine ring and she fired twice more creating a group of 1½”, online with the center, but to the right. She made a windage adjustment and her next three shots were as good as one could expect, a 1” group in the center of the bullseye at 500'. She moved to the second target and continued her group tightening up as she fired. Finally, she put in a second magazine and fired 5 rounds at the third and final target. Like the first, this group was 1½”. I went up and replaced the targets, ready for my turn.

Using my Nightforce scope, I managed a 1” group of five on the first target. I had cranked in the windage adjustment Katy had used and my hits were in the bullseye, fractionally high. I applied a little Kentucky windage and held slightly lower on the second target and was rewarded with a ½” group in the center of the bullseye.

“That’s enough,” I said removing the windage adjustment and returning the settings to 100 meters.

“Not half bad.”

“I didn’t shoot to the rifle’s potential, but I haven’t had as much practice as you’ve had. On top of that, I used your windage adjustment and some Kentucky windage holding slightly low. Want to swap magazines?”

“I’m happy with what I have, thank you.”

“Want to try the Marlins?”

“No. If you want to try them at 100 and 166 yards, that’s different.”

“Give me your rifle and I’ll swap them out. You step off 120 paces, marking 100 yards and we’ll use the 166 yards range we already determined. I’ll get two extra boxes of the ammo.”

With the iron sights on the Marlins, we only had an elevation adjustment so we both used Kentucky windage to allow for the slight wind. Both rifles shot close to the same point at both ranges when we added one additional click of elevation at 166 yards. We took the rifles inside and brought out our revolver and pistols, shooting at 10, 15 and 25 yards. For a short range weapon, they would do with the present settings in the case of the pistols and we couldn’t adjust the sights on the Vaqueros.

Considering that it had been a very long day, I cleaned the rifles and handguns while Katy made supper. I thought about all that had been accomplished that day and decided we were as ready as we could be should something happen.

One week later...

We were listening to the portable radio pulling in a Branson station, KOMC. Our CSGs had arrived in the area and two were positioned to launch fighters to protect the Straits and the other two were stationed east of Taiwan. China hadn’t made a move, but did issue a protest and raised the issue at the Security Council, complaining of American interference. Our ambassador to the UN cited rights of navigation and a stalemate ensued. Strangely, the CIS didn’t take a position. Boundaries had been set under UN-CLOS III establishing Internal Waters, Territorial Waters (12-mile limit), Archipelagic Waters, Contiguous Waters (24-mile limit) and Economic Zones (200-mile limit). There was also the Continental Shelf rule which could extend the waters to a maximum of 350 Nautical miles.

The PRC and the ROC were both maintaining CAPs over the Straits. Taiwan had 150 F-16s in its inventory, courtesy of the second Bush Administration. Although the ROC

was heavily outnumbered by the PRCs fighter fleet, US F/A-18s Hornets and Super Hornets provided support for the ROC Air Force. A C-5B had delivered USAF aircraft mechanics covering all systems on the F-16s and a large quantity of spare parts. Did that include additional armaments? Not that plane, but 3 C-5Bs landed so it's anyone's guess.

There were now two issues on the table, the location of the Chinese troops and the presence of the US CSGs. While all of this had been going on, the US troops and their equipment continued to be returned to the US and unloaded. Fox News further reported that 688I class subs had been seen departing the east coast ports for the Atlantic. In fact, every CSG not in retrofit had been fully outfitted and was somewhere at sea. Ships capable of resupplying the CSGs were either with the group or being readied in port and could sail at a moment's notice because their crews were aboard.

One week later...

Nothing had been resolved in the UN, but that wasn't really a surprise. Israel announced that the missile shield originally intended for Poland was assembled in Israel and operational. That wasn't too much of a surprise because DEBKAF had announced the possibility in mid-2009.

Katy and I were still making the weekly trip to Springfield so I could make more job applications and she could visit with her family. A situation arose within her family that seemingly involved us. Her policeman brother had been shot and killed investigating a burglary. Her sister-in-law, having heard about the shooting and been notified of the death, had taken off to the hospital where they'd taken her husband. She'd run a red light and had been broadsided. She was in the hospital in a coma and on life support. They had two children, Steven 12 and Roy 10. There was some discussion about which family member would take in the boys until their mother was out of the hospital. Katy volunteered us.

There were accusations going every which way over the auto accident. Why hadn't the Springfield Police Department provided transportation? Why hadn't a family member provided transportation? She obviously had been in no mental state to be driving. Katy sought, and got, my agreement to put up the boys until their mother recovered. Rob retrieved their clothing and firearms (that was a bit of a surprise) and said he'd arrange for their food stocks to be brought down and stored at our place. He said they bring the LTS foods for his dead nephew and hospitalized wife. I was surprised to learn the next day that he also sent down the nephew's firearms and those of his wife.

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"Is mom going to be ok?"

"That's not up to us; she's in the hands of the doctors and the Lord."

“It’s not fair.”

“I have to agree with you Steve, life’s not fair. Do you know what a Copperhead looks like?”

“Why?”

“This small parcel of land seems to have an overabundance of Copperheads. Your Grandpa caught a lot of them but we still see one occasionally. They don’t have rattles and don’t warn you before they strike.”

“I’ve seen them before. They sure hide well.”

“That’s why I warned you, we wouldn’t want either you or Roy to get a snake bite.”

“Roy has never seen one.”

“How about you stick close to him since you know what they look like?”

“Ok. When is the funeral? When do we get to see Daddy?”

“We can go up tomorrow for a viewing and the funeral is the following day. We’ll stop by the hospital and check on your mom while we’re up there.”

Katy’s brother was wearing his uniform and really did look like he was sleeping. Law Enforcement from all over the state and several other states were in Springfield for the funeral. I’d never attended a funeral for a policeman killed in the line of duty and it was a sight to behold. A piper was brought in and he played Amazing Grace on the bagpipes, chilling me to the bone and causing both boys to erupt in tears.

We had checked on their mother the previous night and the doctor told Katy that the neurological signs weren’t good. There was still some activity, but it was falling off rather than returning. Rob and her father got together with Katy’s dad and they would make the decision should it become necessary. From the discussion I heard after the funeral, they would wait 2-3 weeks after she was declared brain dead before pulling the plug, should she not recover.

Over the course of the next 3 weeks, we made trips to Springfield every other day so the boys could look in on their mother. I don’t really know if it was the right thing to do, but they asked and Katy and I couldn’t say no. Sometime during the second week in ICU, she was declared brain dead by the doctors and moved from ICU to a critical care room. We were focused on the family matter and thought of a possible war were far from our thoughts.

Three weeks to the day that the doctors declared her brain dead, her father suggested pulling the plug. Rob and Katy's dad agreed and the life support was removed. Her heart stopped immediately and we were left to break the news to Steve and Roy.

"Boys your mother was hurt very badly in the accident. She suffered injuries to her brain and the doctors didn't know if she would live. For the last three weeks the only things keeping her alive were those machines. Your Grandpas' agreed to disconnect the machines and your mom has joined your father in Heaven."

There were the cries of disbelief at first followed by a lot of crying. Under the circumstances, the headstone selected for their father had room for both names and only lacked the date of death of their mother. The viewing for family only was the next night and open to the public the following day. The day after, the funeral was held and after the funeral a local church had a luncheon for friends and family. It eventually got to be too much for Steve and Roy and Katy's dad suggested we take them home.

Mid-morning the next day, Katy's dad showed up with something for the boys. An eminently successful attorney with several children of his own, he had an idea of how to take the boys' minds off their loss. He was pulling a horse trailer that contained two mares, Tennessee Walking Horses complete with tack. Katy's Uncle Rob rode along and he had 'Cowboy guns' for when they got older.

"I wasn't sure about these firearms but since they have the M1As, Springfield Armory GI .45s and the Mossberg 12-gauge pumps, I figured I might as well get these firearms for them. You might leave them unloaded and just let them wear them and carry them in the rifle scabbards. Otherwise, I suppose you can teach them how to use all of the weapons. They may be a little young for the big rifles so I added two Ruger Single Sixes. You have a Winchester 9422, don't you?"

"Yes I do."

"I thought so. I bought them each a used one and I picked up 10 bricks of ammo to get them started. Let me know if you need more."

"Are the .22s in good condition?"

"Internals are perfect and they don't appear to have been used a lot. Minor blemishes on the stocks were all I could find. You might be able to fix those with linseed oil or something."

"What does everyone intend to do about the boys? Who is going to take care of them?"

"The three of us and our wives discussed it. We'd like Katy and you to provide a home for them. The boys will be well provided for due to the insurance proceeds. We'll probably leave that in the trust the insurance company set up because of their age. They will be able to access it for college."

“Do you think that wise?”

“What do you mean?”

“I was thinking about all those countries calling our debt, the standoff over Taiwan and the general state of the economy. There could be better choices.”

Rob didn't respond for quite some time, lost in thought. He excused himself and went to talk with Katy and her dad. I haven't mentioned his name, I see. Katy's father's name is Justin. The family name is Bronson. The three of them finished their conversation and waived me over.

“What you said makes sense. There's no telling if there would be anything left in the trust should we go that way and something happen. Justin and I both have a large amount of gold in the form of the American Eagles. We've been buying the coins since they first came out in 1986. Our average investment price is \$500 per ounce. We both agreed to sell the boys a mix of American Eagles for \$500 per ounce. Justin will contact the insurance company and make arrangements. He has been appointed Guardian ad Litem. We can have this resolved within the week.”

“Katy, are you ok with the boys staying with us?”

“I am, are you?”

“Of course.”

“Ok, we're headed back to Springfield and you'll need to get the rest of their things from their home. We'll put it on the market and convert the proceeds to gold under the same arrangement. They'll probably want their computer, their games and that big TV and the VHS/DVD player. You'd better take some boxes for their movies and to clean out the pantry and stored food in the basements. Drop by our place and get our trailer.”

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The changes that Rob had made to the shelter while I had been in Cape Girardeau including adding two additional bedrooms and Katy hadn't furnished them. Our first load from Springfield brought down their bedroom furniture and we put them both up in the guest bedroom. We stored the queen box springs and mattress and the dresser and chest of drawers in the hay loft of the barn, sealed in plastic. On our second trip, we finished cleaning out the pantry and packed the big screen TV, the movies and VHS/DVD player, leaving only the food in the basement. We did that the next day with some help from some of Katy's relatives.

The boys wanted us to take their living room furniture for the basement and neither of us had the heart to turn them down. It took a fourth trip to donate the old furniture in the

basement to Goodwill and pick up their furniture. By that time, the insurance company had settled and the proceeds converted into gold. I presumed that either Rob or Justin would hold the gold for the boys, but we ended up with it, all 700 ounces. There was a \$250,000 policy on their dad and a \$100,000 policy on their mother. \$350,000 bought 700 ounces of American Eagles at \$500 an ounce. 700 troy ounces weight exactly 48 pounds (advp).

Katy and I added an additional cabinet to the shelter to hold their gold and firearms. A few weeks later with the US and China still at each other's throats, the house sold and after paying off the loan, cleared \$50,000 with was also converted into gold; this time an additional 100 troy ounces bringing their total holdings to 800 troy ounces or ~55 pounds (advp), 400 ounces for each boy.

I continued to look for work and had just about run out of places to look. When the US withdrew its troops from wherever they were stationed around the world, the countries where they had been stationed quickly realized they may have pushed too far. They agreed to withdraw their demand for payment of the debt in exchange for the US returning the troops.

That wasn't going to happen; at least not under the present administration. The savings the US was beginning to realize by not having a large portion of our military based overseas was staggering according to the GAO. The GAO should not be confused with the CBO. The GAO is not beholden to anybody.

The two CSGs stationed near the Taiwan Straits swapped places with the two other CSGs in the area allowing the relieved groups to stand down from Zebra to modified Zebra and do easier unreprs. It appeared to the American Navy that, for the moment, they were involved in a Mexican standoff. A Mexican standoff is a slang term defined as a stalemate or impasse, a confrontation that neither side can win. In popular culture, the Mexican standoff is usually portrayed as two or more opponents with guns drawn and ready, creating a very tense situation. Most people were familiar with them because of the Spaghetti Westerns. It seemed very applicable in this situation and was reminiscent of the Cuban Missile Crisis.

On the Korean Peninsula, the North crossed the DMZ after first demining wide strips through the minefields. The two additional CSGs, which were on their way to relieve the Washington and Reagan, were diverted to stand off both the east and west coasts of Korea. Each of these CSGs had three 688I class boats attached of which two were sent ahead, just in case.

It was two days after the action at the DMZ and the Joint Chiefs, with the President's approval, diverted the two CSGs. They moved ahead at standard speed while two of each of the 688I class boats attached to the CVSGs made a mad dash to clear the way. It was the third day before the information was leaked by MSNBC.

After that happened, Fox and CNN played catch up. We drove up to Springfield so I could use someone's computer and ended up at Rob and Anne's. I went to Global Security and looked up the North Korean Navy and printed out what I found. I glanced at it briefly, but didn't take the time to read it; we could do that when we got home.

"What do you make of what happened in Korea?"

"I'm not sure what to think Ted. They have a sizeable Navy even if they don't have many large ships. I'm not a sailor, but if I were, I'd send the attack subs ahead of the Carrier Strike Groups. The subs have tomahawk missiles that they can use against possible Chinese Silkworms and other missiles the North has. I think the North has some older Russian subs and they would represent a threat against our strike groups."

"I printed out the information on their navy but didn't really take the time to read it. Do you think that the Chinese and North Korean actions are some sort of coordinated attack? If we hadn't had those two CSGs on their way to replace the Washington and Reagan, we'd have had to pull those two strike groups north to handle Korea. I'm also wondering if six groups will be enough."

"I guess that remains to be seen. How are the boys doing?"

"I suppose about like a person would expect them to act after losing both parents. They're good boys and since Steve knows what a Copperhead looks like and Roy doesn't, I've asked Steve to stick close to Roy."

"They're just small enough that a big Copperhead might present a problem. I know the venom is weaker than that of a rattlesnake but they are related to the Cottonmouth and a Cottonmouth can kill a grown man. We don't see many but the Western Cottonmouth is found in south central Missouri."

"When was the last time a Cottonmouth bite killed anyone?"

"Sometime during the thirties. I don't remember which year, but there were 8 bites reported with 3 fatal."

"Do we have to worry about them in my area?"

"Probably not. Might run across a massasauga rattlesnake, or not, hard to say. But you know there have been reports of timber rattlers in South East Iowa."

We visited for a while longer and touched on many topics including healthcare. Rob was plainly worried about what was occurring in the Far East. Justin and Katy's mom, Jeanie, showed up and the ladies got into a bit of a gabfest. Rob broke out the Heinekens and we had a beer. I'm not much of a beer drinker and actually prefer something a little lighter, like Coors. We'd sometimes buy a six pack and it would nearly go bad before we drank it up, it's only good for about 120 days.

Why That One – Chapter 6

When we got home, I sat down and read the printout from Global Security describing the North Korean Navy:

Korean People's Army Navy

The navy, a separate branch of the KPA, is headquartered at P'yongyang. In 1992 the 40,000 to 60,000-person brown-water navy was primarily a coastal defense force. The navy is capable of conducting inshore defensive operations, submarine operations against merchant shipping and unsophisticated naval combatants, offensive and defensive mining operations, and conventional raids. Because of the general imbalance of ship types, the navy has a limited capability to carry out missions such as sea control or denial and antisubmarine operations.

Most North Korean combat vessels, such as light destroyers, patrol ships, guided missile boats, torpedo boats, and fire support boats are small. Some 40 guided missile boats pose a substantial threat; they have the capability of launching missile attacks against large vessels and are equipped with two to four 46-km-range Styx anti-ship missiles. At present, over 60% of North Korean combat vessels are deployed in forward bases.

The primary offensive mission of the navy is supporting army actions against South Korea, particularly by inserting small scale amphibious operations – SOF units – along the coast. The navy also has a limited capability to conduct rocket and shore bombardment raids against selected coastal targets. However, any North Korean force attempting to engage in these operations would be at risk from both air and surface combatants because of limited air defense and detection capabilities.

North Korea builds small- and medium-size submarines mainly in the Nampo and Wonsan Shipyard, but also in other small- and medium-size shipyards along the two coastal lines where naval and military bases are scattered.

In the early 1990s the navy seldom operated outside the North Korean military exclusion zone, a zone extending some fifty kilometers off North Korea's coast from which it sought to exclude operations by any other navy. Although seaborne infiltration attempts into South Korea are believed to have largely stopped by the 1990s, testimony of North Korean spies apprehended by South Korea in early 1992 indicated successful infiltration continues. Clashes with the South Korean navy and harassment of South Korean fishing boats once occurred with regularity, but such incidents were rare in as of mid-1993.

The Naval Command has two separate fleets: the East Sea Fleet and Yellow Sea Fleet, with sixteen combatant groups. The fleets do not exchange vessels, and their areas of operations and missions determine their organizational structure; mutual support is difficult at best.

- The Yellow Sea Fleet, made up of six squadrons [versus five in the early 1990s] and approximately 300 vessels, is headquartered at Namp'o, with major bases at Pip'a-got and Sagot and smaller bases at Ch'o-do and Tasa-ri.
- The East Sea Fleet, with ten squadrons [versus nine in the early 1990s] and approximately 470 vessels [versus 400 in the early 1990s], is headquartered at T'oejo-dong, with major bases at Najin and Wonsan and lesser bases at Ch'aho, Ch'angjn, Mayangdo, and Puam-ni near the DMZ.

There are many smaller bases along both coasts. The submarine force is decentralized. Submarines are stationed at Ch'aho, Mayang-do, Namp'o, and Pip'a-got naval bases. Approximately 60 percent of the North Korean naval force is deployed close to the front line area. They include 430 combat vessels, such as patrol boats, missile boats, torpedo boats and fire support vessels, 35 submarines including 9 small ones, and 335 supporting vessels such as landing ships and air cushion vessels. Support vessels are composed of amphibious vessels including personnel landing craft, landing craft air cushion (LCAC), surface patrol boats and mine countermeasure vessels. These support vessels, however, have a limited role in long-distance operations.

Submarines, most of which are of the 20-some Romeo-class, are outdated and slow, but they are sufficiently capable of blocking sea lanes. These vessels could attack ROK surface vessels, emplace mines anywhere within the ROK maritime territory, or secretly infiltrate commandos into the South.

The forward deployment of small high-speed boats such as torpedo and missile boats provides North Korea with an enhanced capability to launch a surprise attack on US combat vessels in the waters along the front line. In particular, the missile boats are equipped with Styx anti-ship missiles with a range of 45 km. The submarines could be used in conducting such missions as blocking sea lanes, placing mines or landing commandos. North Korea deploys 95 km-range Samlet and Silkworm ground-to-sea missiles on its eastern and western coasts. The Silkworm missiles are estimated to be capable of striking vessels near Inchon on the western coast and near Sokcho on the east.

Continuing to build attack warships, North Korea has tried to enhance its naval capabilities through developing new ground-to-sea missile systems, such as extending the striking range of the Silkworm missiles. North Korea also deploys 80-95 km-range ground-to-ship Samlet and Silkworm missiles on both east and west coasts. Silkworm missiles, deployed in the forward area, are able to launch anti-ship attacks as far as Tokjok-do in the Yellow Sea and Sokcho and Yangyang on the east coast. Coastal defense artillery includes 122-mm, 130-mm, and 152-mm systems.

To date, the DPRK has indigenously produced over 200 personnel landing craft. This includes approximately 100 NAMPO personnel landing craft based on a former Soviet P-6 torpedo boat hull. The NAMPO has a maximum speed of 40 knots and a radius of 335 nm at 28 knots. The NAMPOs provide a limited amphibious capability, each carry-

ing up to 30 troops with a basic combat load. Amphibious assaults against CFC probably would be small, clandestine landings involving two to six NAMPO craft; CHAHO or other naval craft could provide fire support. Other amphibious craft include 8 HANTAE medium landing ships, which can carry 3 to 4 light tanks, and approximately 125 KONG BANG amphibious hovercraft.

The DPRK has a credible mine warfare capability. There are numerous small surface ships that are capable of delivering mines within both the navy and civilian sectors. Mines will be used to defend against amphibious assaults, defend strategic ports, and provide seaward flank protection for land forces. Defensive mine fields will be monitored by coastal observation teams and radar, and they will be supported by well emplaced artillery and missile batteries. This will make close approach and mine clearing operations extremely hazardous. DPRK has a large inventory of older technology mines, significant historical experience with their effectiveness, and, most importantly, the willingness to use them.

Also operated by the navy are two amphibious surface sniper brigades. The North Korean navy has built over 140 hovercraft capable of carrying platoon-size units ashore in surprise landing operations. These landing craft can maneuver not only at sea, but also on tidal and mud flats and are capable of landing alongside the piers in most parts of the eastern and western coasts. They would be especially useful in areas where there is a wide difference between high and low tides along the western coast. These vessels also have a high survivability due to their good speed at 50 nautical miles per hour, and their forward deployment in both the East and Yellow Seas would greatly enhance North Korea's surprise landing capability in the early stages of a war.

In addition to naval units, there also are noncombatants in the North Korean merchant marine, including ten cargo ships operating directly under the KWP and the Ministry of People's Armed Forces. There are sixty-six other oceangoing vessels in the merchant marine operating under the flag of the Ministry of Sea Transportation.

On November 20, 1998, a North Korean vessel was detected and captured off the waters of the Kangwha Island in an attempt to infiltrate spies, who subsequently escaped to the North. On December 17, 1998, one semi-submersible under control of the Nampo Liaison Office was sunk by the ROK Navy while trying to infiltrate the coast near Yosu. The infiltration was detected by night surveillance equipment of guard units prior to the infiltration, and a navy-air force joint operation sank the semi-submersible about 56 miles south of Yokji-do while it was making its way back to the North in the early morning of December 18.

Between June 7 and June 15, 1999, twenty North Korean fishing boats and seven to eight patrol boats crossed the NLL in the name of "fishing and protecting one's fishing rights." They were met by the ROK Navy which tried to block their intrusion. The two sides confronted each other for eight days. At around 9:28 p.m. on June 15, North Korean patrol boats fired first at ROK Navy vessels. The two sides exchanged gunfire. As a result of this battle, a number of North Korean vessels and persons aboard the ves-

sels were seriously damaged or hurt; this included the sinking of one motor torpedo boat. They retreated back to North Korea.

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“You should read this.”

“Is that the printout from Global Security?”

“Yes, it is. The North Koreans may not have any large naval vessels, but they do have a lot of the smaller ships and boats. They also have 20 of those old Russian Romeo-class subs. I should have read it and looked up the Samlet ground to ship missile; it’s one I never heard of.”

“You can look it up next time we go up. I have a minute, let me read it.”

When Katy finished she asked, “How many Los Angeles class subs did the news say were sent ahead?”

“They didn’t actually say, but hinted at two from each Carrier Strike Group with a third remaining with the group for anti-submarine use.”

“Those 688I class subs have vertical launch tubes?”

“Yes, 12 per sub. They can also launch Tomahawks from their torpedo tubes.”

“Right but each missile in the torpedo room has to replace an ADCAP or something else, right?”

“You seem to be well versed in this, date a sailor once?”

“No, but you know Daddy and Uncle Rob; they’ve talked about things like this from time to time. I suppose some of the things I heard stuck with me. This could turn into a nuclear war in a heartbeat.”

“It’s almost like the Cold War resumed, isn’t it?”

“Daddy sometimes reads patriot fiction and he says one of those authors claims the Cold War never ended, it just changed character.”

“They’ll say anything to get a story from it.”

“I believe that author, not having read the story. Iran and the US have been at each other’s throats for 30 years. India and Pakistan have become nuclear powers although they don’t have nearly as many nukes as the US, Russians and China. The Israelis never

have admitted having nukes so no one knows how many they have. The more countries that have nuclear weapons, the more likely they are to be used.”

“You sound like Sam Nunn and Richard Lugar, the guys that worked together to reduce the Nuclear Threat. That actor, Fred Thompson, who was a Senator and was on Law and Order for a while made a docudrama titled *Last Best Chance*, have you seen it?”

“No, have you?”

“We have a copy somewhere, probably down in the shelter.”

When she indicated that she wanted to watch the DVD, I went looking and found it eventually. Steve and Roy were in the house and said they wanted to watch it too.

“Gee, I don’t know about that, boys. The video touches on a subject that may be over your heads. By that I mean that it is a subject that some adults don’t understand or want to believe. What do you think Katy?”

“Let them watch it and we’ll do our best to explain what it means after they see it.”

“They didn’t explode a bomb?”

“No, they did get the weapons into the US, though.”

“So that movie is just a warning?”

“That’s correct. What they are trying to tell us is how easy it would be for someone to sneak a nuclear weapon into our country.”

“It can’t be that easy!”

“Actually, it can. If the weapon were shielded enough that sensors couldn’t pick up the radiation, they could drive one across our border, bring it in using a container or perhaps by a small boat in Chesapeake Bay.”

“Why would someone want to do that?”

“Our country has made some enemies around the world. Right now, our Navy is engaged in two situations. The first is protecting Taiwan from an invasion by the Chinese and the second is an effort to help South Korea to repel an invasion by North Korea.”

“That’s what you were listening to on the radio; news about the war that might happen?”

“That’s right, Steve. Did your father or mother talk to you about it?”

“Dad said that he hoped it didn’t happen because it could go nuclear. That really upset mom. Does that mean that everyone shoots missiles at everyone else?”

“Not every country, no; only the ten countries with nuclear weapons.”

“Which countries are those?”

“The United States, Russia, China, France, the United Kingdom, Israel, India, Pakistan, Iran and North Korea are the only countries known or suspected of having nuclear weapons. There are different kinds of nuclear weapons, atomic bombs and hydrogen bombs. The United States invented the atom bomb during WWII and dropped two on Japan which caused the Japanese to surrender. The only bombs exploded since then have been tests and only North Korea has tested weapons in the past few years.”

“Who has the most?”

“The answer depends upon who you ask, but it is either Russia or the United States. Either country has more than all the rest combined. People that speculate about who will use them usually say that it will start with India and Pakistan. North Korea doesn’t have many weapons and no good way to get them to a target. Iran hasn’t been confirmed to have the weapons because they haven’t tested one. Everyone thinks Israel has built from 200 to 400, but nobody knows for sure.”

“Why not?”

“Israel won’t answer questions about nuclear weapons. They neither admit nor deny they have them. However, they have a reactor in the desert and some people think they tested one when South Africa had a test.”

“You didn’t say South Africa had nuclear weapons.”

“That’s because they no longer have them. They signed the nuclear nonproliferation treaty. The test was called the Vela Incident and there is mixed evidence concerning whether or not it was a test. Vela was a US satellite that sensed the test. It was confirmed by that big radio telescope in Puerto Rico that picked up an atmospheric disturbance at the same time and radioactive iodine was detected in some sheep in Australia later.”

“Radioactive what?”

“Iodine. It’s a product of nuclear fission. Anyway, do you understand why we’re staying close to home?”

“Shouldn’t we be in Springfield so we can use the shelter?”

“Our basement is a shelter. That’s why it has that big heavy door at the bottom of the stairs.”

“You’re like our Grandpas. Do you have all of our guns and things?”

“Yes,” Katy answered, “We have all of your things. For now, the family intends that you will stay with us down here near the border.”

“We don’t have anyone to play with,” Roy pouted.

“You have each other and Rob brought some things down for you. Would you like to have them now?”

“What are they?”

“A rifle and revolver for each of you. They’re .22s and if you’d like, we four can go practice with them.”

“Now?”

“Tomorrow after we do the chores. It’s getting late and I’m going to start dinner now.”

“Aww.”

Since we had spent considerable time in Springfield that day, supper tonight would be a bit of a treat, hamburgers and French fries. Katy turned on the French fryer to heat and made the ground beef patties. She started them and by the time she was ready to turn the burgers, the fryer was hot and she dropped a basket of fries. She had just started the second batch of fries when the burgers were done and she added buns and placed both on serving platters and set out paper plates. I got the mustard and ketchup from the refrigerator and the large jar of dill pickle slices.

After dinner, the boys showered and got ready for bed. The President was making a scheduled speech to the country making one last pitch for the healthcare package stalled in Congress. The House and Senate had both come up with packages of their own and they varied widely. So far the conference committee was unable resolve the differences. The GOP in both the House and Senate opposed the packages and the CBO had warned that the cost estimates of both packages result in a massive deficit.

This speech wasn’t much different from the one he’d made in September 2009 and he did his best to ignore the bills passed by the House and Senate and continued to pursue his own program. If anyone yelled, “You Lie,” this time, it went unnoticed. Let me tell you one thing right now, Mr. Obama would be an awful wartime President if a war broke out. Rob and Justin believe that if a war broke out, it would be over in an hour. I had trouble disagreeing with them.

We had breakfast the next morning and then did the chores. Steve and Roy were on pins and needles wanting to shoot their new firearms. While I had a 9422, I didn't have a single-six. We finally got the boys set down at the kitchen table with their firearms and I instructed them on the safety rules (they knew them by heart) and explained how to load the rifles and work the actions. Next, I went over the Single-Six with them and told them I'd have to use one of theirs for demonstrations. Katy got up and left the table, saying she'd be right back.

"Here."

"You have a Single-Six?"

"I think every member of the family had a Single-Six at one time or another. I kept mine and had forgotten about it. You can use it to demonstrate for the boys."

I used her handing it to me as an example and checked to see if it was loaded; it was.

"Rule one: a firearm is always treated as if it is loaded until you confirm the condition of the firearm. What would have happened if I had assumed this revolver was unloaded and demonstrated it without checking?"

"You would have shot someone?"

"No, you never point a firearm at anything you don't intend to shoot. Not only that, you must be aware of the things in the background of where you intend to shoot. Do not put your finger on the trigger until you intend to shoot."

After we'd satisfied ourselves they wouldn't shoot each other or us, we took them out and started on targets first. After Katy and I were satisfied they could both shoot reasonably well, we switched to letting them shoot soda cans. Not only can you use them for targets, when you've shot them full of holes, you can still sell them to the recycler.

Walking back to the house to clean the 3 rifles and three revolvers, the cell phone rang. It was Justin and he wanted to know if we had the radio on. I explained we'd been out shooting and he said to get to a radio, quick.

"That was your Dad and he said to get to a radio quick, something must be going on."

...was hit by a torpedo off the North Korean coast. The Stennis is in no danger of sinking due to the ships being at material condition Zebra, the highest state protection. A source who declined to be named suggested that the submarine was lying on the bottom waiting for the Strike Group to move within 100 miles of the coast. The submarine was torpedoed by the Los Angeles class attack submarine that was providing anti-submarine duties for the Strike Group and was at the far opposite side of the carrier. Seven sailors were injured and 2 killed.

The advance submarines have reportedly destroyed several of the Silkworm and Samlet anti-ship missile sites. Due to security issues, limited information has been made available to the media. The Reagan has been ordered to move from Taiwan to replace the Stennis which will remain on station until relieved and the Stennis will return to Yokosuka for repairs.

The White House has condemned the attack, citing rights of navigation in international waters. An unconfirmed rumor has been floated concerning the removal of several W80 warheads from the strategic reserves. No destination for the warheads was given. It is unknown whether they're destined for Korea or our forces near Taiwan. We'll be back after a word...

"Well, that just raised the stakes."

"What's a W80?"

"It's the nuclear warhead for the Tomahawk."

"How long before they can be made operational?"

"I can't believe it would take all that long to transport them from wherever they're stored to their destination. Plus, I have no idea how long it would take to switch the warheads. That bit about the Stennis going to Yokosuka for repairs doesn't fit either. Remember that fire on the Washington just before it was to relieve the Kitty Hawk? They had to send it stateside to make the repairs. They'll have to put the Stennis in dry dock to repair the hull."

"This is starting to get really scary."

"I agree. The carriers or resupply ships carry the B61-7s for use on the F/A-18s."

The phone rang a second time and Katy answered. She talked with caller for several minutes before hanging up.

"That was Daddy again checking to see if we heard the news. They are in process of assembling the family members closer to Uncle Rob's shelter. Everyone that can get off work is gathering there and they're using a family picnic as a cover. He seems to think that those TLAM-Ns could be ready for use within about 3-4 days. He suggested that if we had any loose ends to wrap them up."

"We can start digging the potatoes, pulling the onions and gathering the squash. That should do it for the garden and we'll wait to move the livestock from the feedlot into the barn until we know more."

"Boys, we'll clean the guns later. There are some bushel baskets in the barn; please get them and meet us in the garden. We'll have the squash cut by the time you get there."

Load them into the baskets and one of us will put them into the pickup to bring to the basement. After that gather the onions and start in on the potatoes. After a basket is loaded, just let it sit, they'll be too heavy for you to move."

"Katy, did you start something for supper?"

"I told you I had a roast in the crock pot."

"That's right, I forgot. We can get this done in 2-3 hours if we work steadily. Let me get the spading fork. The onions should pop free with just a tug."

"How much time do we have before something happens?"

"Best guess? Anywhere from 24 to 72 hours."

I was right on the timeline and didn't know it. I was talking about the start of WW III. I was totally wrong about that. For preppers, it's irrelevant, prepared is prepared. That evening at 8pm CDT, the President addressed the nation:

My fellow Americans,

I come to you tonight, not with news of a pending war, but with an announcement far more serious. JPL has detected an asteroid headed for the Earth. It is estimated to be 1 kilometer in diameter and composed of nickel-iron. The asteroid came from behind the Sun and the influence of the Sun's gravity and that of Venus have altered its path enough to put it on a near collision course with this planet.

Final calculations have been completed and it has been determined that it will pass the Earth near the Asian landmass in slightly over three days. We have notified every nation on the Earth, whether friend or foe. The CIS's scientists have confirmed our calculations and suggest that the pass will occur southeast of the 1908 Tunguska Event, the explosion of a 300 meter object.

During the past weeks, there has been a run on grocery stores and suppliers of Long Term Storage foods. While your government normally recommends you maintain a 3 day supply of food and essentials, many have sought to increase that to a two week supply. We urge everyone to increase their supply of essentials to that two week level. The Department of Homeland Security will work with all grocery chains to impose limits.

No family will be allowed to purchase more than a 14 day supply of foodstuffs. Since there is insufficient time to implement a system to prevent shoppers from acquiring a 14 day supply from more than one source, we have no choice except to rely on an honor system and plead with you to not do that.

If a family has more than the recommended food stores, they are urged to share. While Executive Orders are already in place to permit me to order those with excess food to

turn it in to the government, I have concluded that it would not be in the best interests of the country and will not implement that, at this time. It is better in the hands of those who can distribute it themselves.

In view of the present emergency, lawlessness will be dealt with harshly. Looters will be shot on sight. Should food riots break out, the state National Guards, working under the control of their various Governors, will attempt to restore order. Should that fail, the US Military under the Insurrection Act of 1807 will restore order.

I have asked all living former Presidents to advise me in the next 72 hours. Those available include James Earl Carter, George Herbert Walker Bush, William Jefferson Clinton and George Walker Bush.

Thank you and good night. God Bless America and God Bless the Earth.

Why That One – Chapter 7

“Oh, my God!”

“You can say that again.”

“Oh, my God! But what if...”

“What if?”

“Yes, Ted, what if they’re wrong.”

“Wrong how?”

“What if they failed to properly compute the effect of the Earth’s gravity?”

o

Washington...

“Does anyone remember that old Sean Connery movie, *Meteor*?”

“I remember it Mr. President.”

“Why don’t the Russians and the US have systems in place like they did in that movie?”

“It was just a movie, Mr. President. Neither country could afford such a system.”

“Is the idea feasible?”

“If we had the systems in place, which we don’t, maybe. But, if you’ve seen the movie then you know the planet was still struck by the remaining portion of that rock. Central Park, if I remember correctly. The problem is that our existing missiles lack the ability to intercept the rock and we lack the time to make any changes.”

“So we’re sitting here looking at a war with China and or North Korea and the asteroid is going to hit Asia? Would that be enough to get either country to launch an attack on the remainder of the world? Isn’t there some way to intercept the asteroid?”

“We’ve considered that Mr. President. Our conclusion was that since China shot down that old weather satellite in 2007 and we shot down that defunct spy satellite in 2008, it might be possible although no one has tried another satellite shoot down.”

“What would it take for us to try that?”

“More than we have. When we took down the satellite we used a kinetic kill vehicle, not a warhead. Considering the mass of that 1 kilometer asteroid, it will be far more damaging than the Tunguska event which involved an asteroid between 150 and 300 meters in diameter. The Spaceguard and the B612 organizations efforts are intended in the case of the first, to locate near Earth objects and in the case of the second, to find a way to prevent an asteroid from striking Earth. B612’s goal is to complete the project by 2015. There is also the Icarus Project mentioned in *Meteor*, but that’s a scientific reporting journal and a report authored by MIT.”

“Is there any chance at all we could launch some of our Minuteman III missiles to intercept the asteroid?”

“Theoretically, perhaps. The timing on such an endeavor would be critical, down to milliseconds or microseconds. The other problem I see is that if we launch, even if we forewarn the nations of the Earth, it might be seen as a preemptive strike. Should that happen, China, and possibly even Russia might launch on us.”

“Could we coordinate the launch with both the Russians and Chinese?”

“Russia, maybe; we’re nearly at war with China and I doubt that is possible.”

“Look into would you and get back to me in 6 hours.”

“Yes sir.”

◦

Beijing...

“Tell me, General, whether or not we can use the same missile to intercept the asteroid as we used to destroy the weather satellite.”

“Would that I could, Minister. As with the later American satellite destruction, we used a kinetic kill vehicle. Considering the weight of our nuclear weapons, the only possibility would be to intercept the asteroid just as it begins to enter the outer atmosphere. We could launch our entire fleet of missiles and strike it with several megatons of energy. However, coordinating near simultaneous explosions is at the leading edge of our capability, if not beyond.”

“The Americans sent a cable indicating that they might consider a shoot down but expressed concern that their attempt might be construed as a first strike. They would attempt to launch several of their Minuteman III missiles, each equipped with a Peacekeeper warhead. We also heard from Russia concerning a possible attempt they are considering.”

“Are their attempts to be coordinated?”

“Neither communication was totally clear on that point. Both stated that they were attempting to coordinate with the other party but gave no indication whether or not it had been agreed. I have held my reply pending your response to the question I raised.”

“The Russians and Americans haven’t worked together on anything since World War Two.”

“That’s not entirely true General. They worked together to defuse the Cuban Missile Crisis.”

“A problem of their own making, Minister.”

“Still, I wonder if our best chance might not lie in working with them to attempt to intercept the asteroid. It will not hit either of their countries and yet they are attempting to intercept it.”

“We can try. Perhaps with all three powers making the attempt, one might succeed. However, we should not use our entire missile force in case it is a ruse and indeed a cover for a first strike by one or both.”

“What would you suggest?”

o

Moscow...

“Have you studied the cable from the Americans Mr. President?”

“I have Mr. Foreign Secretary. You know them far better than I do; what is your best assessment of what they propose?”

“I might have trusted George Bush but this new President is more of an unknown. Yes he has been to Moscow and visited with both of us although he gave me a queasy feeling.”

“Have the Chinese responded to either us or the Americans?”

“We haven’t heard and if the Americans have, they haven’t informed us. Since they are all but at war with the Americans, I suspect they may presume that the intercept attempt would be a cover for a first strike.”

“If we proceed, which missile do we propose to use?”

Note: Russian President Dmitry Medvedev on 05 November 2008 cancelled the order to disband three regiments of the 28th Guards Missile Division of Russia’s missile forces in

Kozelsk, Kaluga Region. Steps to disband it began in 2007. It includes five missile regiments, or 46 silo launchers of SS-18 intercontinental ballistic missiles.

“We will use the R-36M model 6s.”

“All of them?”

“No, only 12 of them. They will put 240mT of energy on the asteroid.”

“And the others?”

“Call them insurance in case we’re being deceived.”

◦

Washington...

“Anything new?”

Mr. President, the Russians replied that they are considering launching 12 of their SS-18 Satans. They’re the latest model with a single 20mT warhead. We haven’t heard from the Chinese yet.”

“How many Minuteman IIIs will we launch if necessary?”

“Twenty-four sir, a total of 7mT of energy.”

“Keep me informed and make certain this doesn’t leak to the Main Stream Media. The last thing we need is activists complaining about our using nuclear weapons.”

“Yes sir, we’re holding the information close and tight.”

“Excuse me for interrupting Mr. President. You have a conference call on the hot line.”

“Putin or Medvedev?”

“Both.

◦

“Mr. President, Mister Foreign Secretary, what can I do for you?”

“Mr. President, our scientists have completed their calculations and have reached a different result from your scientists’ calculations. According to our calculations, the effect of Earth’s gravity will draw the asteroid closer in and it will probably impact China.”

“I see...have you informed the Chinese?”

“We have.”

“And their reaction?”

“They said they would consider launching an attack with all 20 of their DF-5s.”

“Excuse me if this question is offensive, but do you trust the Chinese?”

“Not entirely. We’ll keep you apprised of our intentions. As we related earlier, we intend to launch 12 of our R-36Ms, the one the West calls the SS-18 Satan.

“We are prepared to launch up to 24 Minuteman IIIs, if your computations are confirmed.”

“Good, keep in touch.”

◦

The Chinese didn’t contact either the US or Russia. They concluded they would have their missiles ready to fly and if the Russian and American efforts failed, they’d use their missiles for their intended purpose, attacking Russia and America. The President and the Foreign Minister discussed that possibility and considered it remote. Under no circumstance would they attack each other or China. China would have enough problems without dodging warheads.

What neither country told the other was that they fully intended on retaliating against China if the Chinese attacked. The asteroid impact wouldn’t occur in the area where the Chinese leadership would be sheltered. Those locations would be attacked and if the location happened to be a population center, so what? Neither country intended on a massive launch, electing on a one-for-one retaliation. If the launch on the asteroid was successful, China probably wouldn’t attack. They’d have to monitor any launches from China carefully and determine the exact trajectory. Just because China hadn’t responded didn’t mean they might not make their own attempt at taking out the asteroid.

◦

The rock that caused the extinction of the Dinosaurs, as evidenced by the Chicxulub crater, was larger than this rock. It had a diameter of 10 kilometers. Dead dinosaurs? Yes, that impact was an ELE. Shoemaker Levy 9 was a comet that Jupiter’s gravity broke apart and the fragments impacted Jupiter. We’d seen the impacts on TV when we’d been married to our first partners. The largest fragment was no more than 2 kilometers across. Look it up, you still have a few hours.

So, this rock was somewhere between Tunguska and Chicxulub and it was supposed to hit China. As the clock wound down, we did what we could to protect the livestock and ensure they had enough to eat, initially.

Assuming that Chicxulub and this new rock were spherical, math might serve to give us an idea of what we faced. The volume of a sphere is $\frac{4}{3} \pi r^3$. I was able to call Rob and get him to use a calculator on the web to calculate the volumes. The smaller rock had a volume of 523,598,775 m³ and the larger had a volume of 4,188,790,204,786 m³, a ratio of 8000:1. Did that mean, all factors being equal, the impact in Asia would only be 1/8,000th the impact of the Dinosaur killer? If so, we might get a break, Chicxulub was estimated to have released 4×10^{23} joules (100 million MT) while Tunguska was estimated at something on the order of 30mT. Did this mean the asteroids effect would be 1.25 million megatons? I don't think it does, but only time would tell.

My fellow Americans,

Based on new evidence provided by the Russians, the asteroid is now calculated to hit the Earth.

In conjunction with Russia, missiles will be launched to intercept the asteroid at the outer reaches of our atmosphere. There is no consensus of opinion as to whether our combined efforts will succeed. We are directing missiles with nuclear warheads with a combined yield of approximately 250 megatons, counting the Russian missiles. Timing is critical in our endeavor and even if the warheads breakup the asteroid, we should expect strikes from some portions that weren't destroyed.

Scientific opinion is divided concerning whether or not our efforts will succeed. China has not announced whether they plan to join our efforts. Satellite photos show that they have all of their DF-5 missiles erected and ready to launch. Either way, with the narrow timeframe involved, this is a last ditch attempt to protect the planet. Whether it succeeds or fails, we'll know almost immediately.

Please stay tuned to your local media outlet for our announcement immediately following the impact of our missiles. Our most recent attempt at shooting down a satellite was successful and we hope to similar results in this endeavor.

God Bless America and the planet.

◦

"That's what I was talking about Ted; maybe gravity did affect the asteroid. At least they're going to try and break it up."

"Cross your fingers and hopes it works. We should plan on being in the shelter 30 minutes prior to the ETA of the asteroid."

What the President didn't tell America was that there existed a real possibility that China would use the opportunity to launch attacks on the US and Russia should it appear the attempt failed. He had discussed this possible action on the part of China and both the Russians and we were at the second highest defense condition, ready to launch on China should that occur. We checked the animals and had a quick lunch before moving to the shelter.

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"How long?"

"Sixteen minutes before they hit. I don't trust the Chinese, It's possible that they'll launch on us and the Russians regardless of the outcome," said the modern day equivalent of Curtis E. LeMay.

"Why?"

"I'm not sure they'd have time to launch should the effort fail."

In order to mask their intentions, the Chinese launched at nearly the same time as the Russians who had launched after the Americans. The American warheads did little to damage the asteroid although they slowed it imperceptibly. The huge Russian warheads fragmented the asteroid. Most of the fragments were now on the order of size of the rock that created the Barringer Meteor Crater. They struck China, Mongolia and Siberia.

Each of the three nations, unsure of the others, had moved their military forces to DEFCON 2, or the equivalent. The US had reactivated Cheyenne Mountain and every politician and their families were sheltered, somewhere. A controller at Cheyenne Mountain reported multiple launches from China.

"Tracking...computer is working a solution...standby."

"What is the problem, Captain?"

"The trajectories are ambiguous, sir. They could be launching on the asteroid, the US or Russia."

"I need a solution right now. Ok, move us to DEFCON 1, I'll get National Command Authority online."

"Still tracking...trajectories are starting to diverge...got it. Half are headed for Russia and half for the United States."

“Mr. President, the Chinese launched all 20 of their DF-5 missiles. Ten are on course for Russia and ten on course for the US. I’ve moved our status to DEFCON 1. Yes sir, ten MIRV’d Minuteman IIIs; you’ll need the football sir for the PAL codes.”

The SECDEF was a holdover from the Bush administration. There had been nothing discussing whether or not Barak Obama would or would not use nuclear weapons against other countries should a situation arise. Despite campaign promises, he had initially increased forces in Afghanistan only later to pull out our entire force. He’d already made clear that he was unhappy with North Korea and Iran over nuclear weapons and even Israel over their continuing to build settlements.

The old General was surprised at the limited response to China. And then, he realized that Russia would surely hit them too. All of this was in addition to what the asteroid did to the country. *LeMay wouldn’t have done it this way*, he thought. Lemay was retired before the old General even entered the USAF and was a graduate of the first class of the Air Force Academy. He had been the ultimate fan of the now dead General. They called him, among other things, ‘Bombs Away LeMay’.

The General thought the military, and the Air Force especially, was too focused on high tech gadgetry. Stealth was expensive and for the price of one F-22, they could have built 3 F-15Es or 6 F-16Cs. The F-35As were just now entering service and cost more than the F-15E. But few listened to him claiming he was behind the times.

After a hurried call to the Russian President, Obama forwarded the PAL codes to 10 launch sites and ordered the SSBNs to standby for orders. He hoped on a limited exchange because the Chinese only had 20 DF-5s. And in a hurry to speak with the Russian President and release the missiles, no public announcement was made warning of the incoming warheads.

MSM was reporting the successful attack on the asteroid, unaware of the beginning of the Third World War. The Russians have a system called Dead Hand (known also as Perimetr), implemented during the ‘80s. It’s not a secret and can best described as a Fail-Deadly system, the opposite of Fail-Safe. Communications between the Soviet leadership and the general staff, as well other assets such as radar stations, missile silos and command centers, were continuously monitored. In the event of nuclear explosions and an unexplained communications failure, relatively junior officers were authorized to release their weapons without higher approval.

Anyone who had seen the movie ‘Fail Safe’ knew that in the event a system designed to not launch unless instructed to do so by the NCA failed and we started the war would have been terrified of system that did the opposite, launched unless ordered not to do so. One or more of the Chinese warheads disrupted the Russian communications networks and rather than a limited response against China, the entire missile force was launched against all pre-assigned targets.

The US used launch on warning, consequently when the junior Russian officers launched their missiles, we responded in kind. While we were short 34 of the Minuteman III missiles, having sent 24 to the asteroid and 10 to China, they weren't our only assets. We had 20 B-2 bombers and 3 times as many B-52s. Our B-1Bs hadn't been retrofitted back to being capable of carrying nukes. We also had 4 SSGNs and 14 SSBNs; the latter each equipped with 24 D-5 Trident II SLBMs. In the final analysis, Americans still had 3 separate means of delivering nukes.

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The radio was announcing the success of the attack on the asteroid when it suddenly went off the air. Katy and I tried fooling with it to find another station, to no avail. I dug my backup radio out of the cabinet and tried it, with the same results. We went upstairs and tried to call Justin or Rob but couldn't get a dial tone.

"You don't suppose that...?"

"That the Chinese attacked us instead of the asteroid?"

"Could be Ted. Maybe we better lock up the shelter and start the air purification system, just in case. We can hook up the meters and wait to see if there's any fallout. I wonder why Daddy and Uncle Rob haven't called."

"Maybe their phones are out too."

"We could try the radio."

"Maybe just a quick check but we're going to ground the antenna right after that."

"Earthquake!"

"I don't think so Katy; maybe a nuclear warhead. Oh, you mean the New Madrid Fault Zone? I suppose it's possible."

It turned out that Katy was wrong; the Chinese launched ten missiles at the US and ten at Russia. The ten launched on Russia activated their Dead Hand system and Russia launched on everybody. In turn, everyone who had a missile that could reach Russia, retaliated. Those that couldn't reach Russia launched on whoever was at the top of their enemies list. It wasn't until later when the meters started to register radiation that we knew for certain that the US had been attacked.

In and of itself, it wasn't that big of deal, we were prepared for a GTW. I should check that and say that we were prepared to the extent it is possible to prepare for a thing like a GTW. I had copied every patriot fiction story I could from Frugal's so when this happened, I had something to read. I started to be able to identify the authors by their writing styles. Tired Old Man had a thing for the M1A. Fleataxi had a thing for science fic-

tion and Jerry D. Young had a thing for expensive, high quality equipment and the PTR-91.

TOM wanted a M1A Super Match more than anything but could only afford the Loaded. He also had a thing for the M82A1M Barrett rifle and things that went boom. Those included M-72 LAW rockets, hand grenades and Mk-211MP Raufoss ammunition for the Barrett. In a way, his stories were a roadmap, telling us where in Missouri to look for things. The prime examples were the Lake City Ammo Plant in Independence and Fort Leonard Wood. He apparently believed that no matter how well you were supplied and equipped, after the war you needed to scavenge and salvage.

Among those three authors, just about every possibility had been addressed. Other authors had addressed similar subjects although they hadn't written as many stories. As nearly as I could tell at the time, TOM had started 82 stories and completed all but two, 'In Harm's Way' and 'Melt Down'. I could tell from comparing his stories listed in Patriot Fiction and Patriot Fiction-Collected Works.

I attributed his love for things that went boom on a childhood dream of being a soldier. A little known fact about him was that he almost joined the Marine Corps in 1961 instead of the Air Force. He barely made it through Air Force Basic and Marine Boot Camp would have killed him. Can't remember which story he mentioned those things.

Why That One – Chapter 8

Given our location, the radiation only peaked at 165R. This allowed us out for brief periods beginning at 21 days when it fell to 104mR. However, we made the decision not to stay topside until it reached 52mR at 38 days. It had rained during our time in the shelter and the fallout particles had been washed down to the road and collected in the ditch. No decontamination was required. There was the pile of soil leftover from putting in the culvert connecting the shelter and the barn and we hauled it down to the ditch and buried the remaining fallout.

Unable to raise Rob on the radio, we loaded up our weapons and family and made our way to Springfield. We were stopped on the outskirts of Branson although allowed to continue, with an escort, once we showed ID. When we pounded on the shelter door, those inside finally came out.

“I couldn’t reach you by radio. Was it me or was it you?”

“It was us I’m afraid. The antenna switch wasn’t in the grounded position and the EMP took out our radio. We have spares, but they’re stored in the cabinet in the basement of the house. How did you fair down there?”

“It wasn’t a problem; we were prepared well in advance. We spent our time reading Patriot Fiction and the boys watched DVDs. We came out briefly at 21 days when our radiation level fell to 104mR but only came out permanently yesterday when the level was at 52mR. No point in accumulating too much this early.”

“How are you on supplies?”

“We still have a two year supply. Say, we felt the ground shake a little.”

“Yeah, we think that was Whiteman Air Force Base. What do you plan to do now?”

“Well, after all the reading we did, we talked about doing some salvaging and scavenging. Maybe make a trip to Fort Leonard Wood and hunt around for a M107, some M1022 and Mk211 for the Barrett and pick up a few things that go boom.”

“You been reading TOM, haven’t you?”

“We did for a fact; and Jerry and Fleataxi. I’ve just started *Normal* by Grand58742. That will take days, it’s a long story.”

“When are you going to the Fort?”

“The sooner the better. Katy and I will go and leave the boys with you if it’s ok.”

“Not likely. Two of her brothers will go along to provide support in case you run into trouble. When are you going?”

“How about now?”

“Well...hook up my trailer to the Ford and I'll get Don and Justin to get their gear around. Steve and Roy get your things and come into the shelter.”

Katy had 4 living brothers. Robert was the cop who had been killed. Her living brothers were Donald, Justin Jr., Paul and David. For some reason known only to them, Robert and his wife named their boys Steven and Roy after her uncles. Their full names were Steven Justin and Roy Robert.

The two brothers going with us were armed with M1911 pattern pistols; the shotguns were a 590A1 and an 870 police model with the handgrip and their rifles were a STG-58 and a PTR-91. They had plenty of magazines and bandoleers with more rifle ammo on stripper clips. It was only a quick drive up I-44, normally about one and one-half hours, but took us three because of the stopped vehicles. Katy made note of all of the stopped semis, entering their locations as waypoints in our GPS.

The Fort was on lockdown and no guards were posted. We admitted ourselves after busting the gate open and started to look around for ammo bunkers. We eventually found them and filled the trailer with the usual suspects, LAWs, assorted hand grenades, M1022, Mk-211MP, .50 BMG belted, 7.62 loose and belted plus 5.56 loose and belted. Most of the pistol ammo was 9mm but we did find some old FMJ 230gr .45acp. The only shotgun shells we found were breaching rounds, non-lethal rounds, flares and 00 buck, all 12-gauge.

Next, we started looking for weapons. We eventually found an armory and took 3 M249s, 3 M240Bs and 2 M2HBs. We took a dozen M4s with the M-203A1s attached and lots of 40mm grenades, some of each kind but mostly HEDP. We also found an Mk-19 and had to go to yet another bunker to get ammo for it. Katy spied a Pelican case and opened it.

“You wanted a Barrett? Take a look at this.”

“Oh my, a M107. Which scope is that?”

“It's a Leupold 4.5x14 Mark-IV scope.”

“Nope, it's not a Leupold. Look, it's a Carl Zeiss 6-24x72. The German Army uses that scope; I wonder why this rifle has one.”

“You don't want it because of the scope?”

“Not at all, this is even better. Let's find the belted 40mm ammo and go home.”

We finished our salvaging and headed to the front gate.

“HALT. ADVANCE AND BE RECOGNIZED.”

There stood a three striper, a Sergeant, holding a M4 with the SOPMOD additions. We had him outnumbered and he had us in his sights. I could see the flip up sights for the M-203A1 were raised and his finger was in the grenade launcher trigger guard. We stopped dead in our tracks.

“ADVANCE AND BE RECOGNIZED.”

Katy, Don and Justin eased their handguns out of the holsters and held them down by their legs. I started to ease the Ford forward, creeping towards the Sergeant.

“MILITARY ID, PLEASE.”

“Uh, that’s going to be a problem Sergeant, we’re civilians.”

“Looting arms and ammunition, no doubt.”

“If you choose to look at it that way, I suppose. We’d prefer to consider it salvage.”

“Get out of the truck, RIGHT NOW.”

The Sergeant still had his trigger finger on the grenade launcher trigger. Three quarters of us had .45 autos held behind their legs. We dismounted and the pistols came up, creating an instantaneous Mexican standoff. We couldn’t miss and he had his finger on the wrong trigger. He paused and then slowly lowered his weapon. Justin disarmed the Sergeant and made certain all of his weapons were on safe. The safety on the M-203 is inside the trigger guard at the front and must be pulled to the rear to render the weapon safe. This is possible because the safety is wider than the trigger guard. We thought we were safe because the minimum arming range was about 14 to 38 meters. Imagine our surprise when we removed a buckshot round from the launcher. Though it is a multipurpose round, it is most effective in thick vegetated areas or for room clearing. Inside it has at least 20 pellets, which cast a cone of fire 30 meters wide and 30 meters high and travel at 269 meters per second. Be sure to aim buckshot rounds at the foot of the target. The round has no mechanical-type fuse.

“Buckshot? Why didn’t you just shoot?”

“I couldn’t be certain to get all four of you at the close in range.”

“Are you alone?”

“I wouldn’t be here on my knees disarmed if I weren’t.”

“What’s your story?”

“I guess I was the first person out of the shelters. I’ve been watching you going from place to place selecting various munitions and ordnance.”

“You local?”

“Springfield.”

“Want a ride home?”

“Yeah, I haven’t tried to start anything but my Mustang and it won’t run. Give me a minute to get my stuff.”

“Justin, you go with him.”

“Rog. Let’s go Sergeant.”

About ten minutes later they returned with his things, he didn’t have much. Justin was carrying 2 boxes full of new 30-round M-16 magazines made by Colt and they were boxes holding 50 magazines each. Two rows of five each lying flat and 5 layers deep.

I’m not a fan of the M-16 unless it has been converted to the short gas piston. Several companies make conversion kits and/or sell uppers to replace your existing upper. I didn’t want to start a fight with anyone over the M4s and kept my peace. Sometimes, things work out for the best, as in, “How many of those gas piston conversion kits are there in the shelter?”

“Fifteen, I think. Dad said something about Uncle Rob getting a discount if he bought that many.”

“Where did he get them?”

“A place called Presidential Arms, Inc. Cost him \$249 plus \$5 shipping each from Douglas, Arizona.”

“How many did he buy?”

“Enough to convert all of the AR-15s and still have 15 left over.”

“So what else did this author salvage?”

“Well, in some of his stories, Jerry had some of his characters recovering Gold and Silver. TOM always went for military hardware and fuel.”

“I suppose we could hunt for gold, provided the citizens of Springfield don’t interfere.”

“Fellas, I have a better idea. I’ve been creating GPS waypoints for abandoned semis. I think I saw a tanker on the southbound on the way up. We should get it because fuel will be hard to get in the future. I also saw a Wal-Mart truck on the northbound side that we should check out.”

Don and Justin agreed but the Sergeant, his name was John, claimed he didn’t know how to drive a semi-tractor. I decided that if we found a third truck worth taking, I’d drive it and Katy and the Sergeant could continue in the pickup with her driving. As we continued, we spotted the tanker. Its battery was low, but we finally got it to turn over. It was a mixed load, 75% diesel and 25% gasoline. A few miles later we came upon the Wal-Mart truck and the cargo box was full.

Closer to Springfield we spied another tanker, 100% diesel and it started right up. I drove that and told Katy to drop the first tanker and Wal-Mart truck at Rob’s, pick up the boys and go home. Don or Justin could get the Sergeant to where he wanted to go. I’d taken the diesel tanker home and waited for her. I told her we need fuel stabilizers, PRI-G and PRI-D, if available.

I got home and managed to move the tanker up to the fill pipe for our diesel tanks. The three tanks were connected by a manifold and fuel was distributed among the three tanks. I started getting an early dinner around and it was ready to pop into the oven when they arrived home. It was tuna and noodles with peas and mushroom soup, topped with cheese. It would only take about 30 minutes to get it hot and for the cheese to melt. I used Velveeta because we had 2 cases of the 2-pound boxes.

I started to think they got lost when Katy and the boys pulled in followed by Don. Don’s pickup was loaded with 5-gallons cans of PRI-G and PRI-D. Said he got the stuff from the distributor that serviced Table Rock Lake. He had 95 gallons of PRI-D and 5 gallons of PRI-G. We could stabilize 190,000 gallons of diesel and 10,000 gallons of gas. He unloaded the pails putting them in the barn.

Up in Springfield, they had sorted out the load and we got an M-249, an M-240B and a Ma Deuce. We also had enough belted ammo to last until we could be rescued, should the need arise. In addition, 4 of the M4s had been converted to the short stroke gas piston and sent along with 20,000 rounds of M855A1 and ~2 gross 40mm grenades of the various types. We also got 30 LAW rockets and ~2 gross assorted hand grenades. Katy said they were working on sorting the contents of the Wal-Mart truck and we were expected in Springfield the following day for our share.

“I have about fifty truck locations in the GPS. It might be a good idea if we take off tomorrow and collect those nearest Springfield if they contain anything the family can use. I think the only one I didn’t note was that first one, the one you brought down here.”

"I checked the bill of lading or manifest. Each tank has 9,000 gallons of diesel and needs 4½ gallons of PRI-D. Why don't you put the tuna and noodles in the oven and wash up? I'll add the stabilizer before I forget."

"We can unpack the trailer and pickup after we eat. Where do you want to store the stuff?"

"How about we keep most of the explosives in the barn and the rest in the shelter?"

"Not around my horses, you don't. Let's put it in the cave."

"Copperhead Cave? In the dark? Are you crazy?"

"We'll use a lantern and we'll have plenty of light. How long has that cave been closed up?"

"Since your uncle Rob cleared it out."

"You don't believe that any snakes he may have missed haven't died by now?"

"Maybe. But I've heard that even a dead snake can bite you."

"You're talking about a freshly killed snake with its head cut off. If you pick the head up too soon, you may get an involuntary muscle reaction, that's all."

Not that I believed her, but I guess it was worth the risk. We kept 5 rockets and an assortment of grenades, hand and 40mm in the shelter. The M4s went into the gun cabinet in the shelter. The machine guns with a few cans of ammo went into the barn. I had the field manual of the machine guns and stayed up late reading. Of course, each was different and I hoped I could keep them straight.

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We began salvage operations full time beginning the next day. We were getting 3 trucks a trip and made two trips a day. It wasn't long before space ran short and the trucks were parked on the construction company lot. Justin, Rob and I discussed looking for precious metals and decided against it since there were too many survivors in Springfield to run the risk. Propane was a different story, however. While Katy and I were totally electric, that wasn't the case with her family in Springfield. They started collecting empty propane tanks and their cradles and mounted several at each of the residences.

They had the necessary jets to convert their appliances, hot water heaters and furnaces to propane and were set for a good long time. Not all of the boys had a generator, but with Cummins in Springfield, it didn't take long to solve that problem. Everyone installed a 30kw propane fueled generator. They also pretty much cleaned out the filters for their generators and the ones that Katy and I used. The only other thing they did was go gro-

cery shopping at a grain elevator, filling 55-gallon paper drums with corn, oats and wheat. Don and Justin made a midnight run to a warehouse and collected coffee, tea, beans, rice, Jello and several cases of hams, among other things.

Rob and Justin raided a drug supply house and loaded up on everyone's prescription drugs plus a few nice to have things like analgesics and vitamins. The analgesics ran from plain Tylenol up to Oxycontin in pill form and a few vials of morphine, Dilaudid and Diazepam. When combined with the Combat Lifesaver packs we got at the Fort, we were ready for bear. Rob had two types of blood stoppers, ACSs and ActCel gauze pads. He also had 3 IV drugs, normal saline, D5W and Lactated Ringer's with administration sets and starter sets.

We stopped after a few days and took stock of where we were. We had air, shelter, water, food, protection and transportation. We had all of those in sufficient quantities to get by for more than 2-3 years. We wouldn't have to stay in the Superdome waiting for FEMA to show up. Down here in the Ridgedale area, we might never see them, sort of like in New Orleans after Katrina.

*We were up the creek; like those folks in DC in *Day After Disaster*. Against a morning sky, a mushroom cloud spirals heavenward. A nuclear bomb has detonated in the heart of Washington DC, incinerating 15,000 residents in just 15 seconds. More than 50% of the population living within a ½ mile radius of the explosion is either dead or severely injured. The next 24 hours will determine whether the rest of the city lives or dies. To survive this horrific ordeal they will need a plan. And lucky for us – there is one. But will it work? For the first time on television, the Department of Homeland Security reveals the most detailed and comprehensive plan to save America should terrorists go nuclear. This chilling two-hour special delves into the complex and highly secretive world of disaster planning.*

A friend who saw the show sent me an e-mail:

The graphics were better than anticipated, especially the shock wave. The message was simple. The government will work on preserving themselves even if it means running the US with unelected officials and suspending the Constitution. There is no sheltering program...for us. There is no way to effectively evacuate a city...there is really nothing they plan on doing except worry about COG.

The advice to back up against a building to reduce exposure to radioactivity? Are you kidding me? How about assume the position and kiss your butt goodbye? We are on our own just like you...I... and a few realists try to tell people.

Yes we had the Federal Emergency Mismanagement Agency, so what? Brownie ain't around no more, but he did one heck of a job. The MSM was just as bad, down amongst the people with a microphone stuck in their face. Did they help the people or just report what a bad job FEMA was doing? The Department of Homeland Insecurity should have prevented that nuke going off. Well, they lived up to their name, I guess.

They have a list of what to do to prepare your family:

- Identify an out-of town contact. It may be easier to make a long-distance phone call than to call across town, so an out-of-town contact may be in a better position to communicate among separated family members.
- Be sure every member of your family knows the phone number and has a cell phone, coins, or a prepaid phone card to call the emergency contact. If you have a cell phone, program that person(s) as "ICE" (In Case of Emergency) in your phone. If you are in an accident, emergency personnel will often check your ICE listings in order to get a hold of someone you know. Make sure to tell your family and friends that you've listed them as emergency contacts.
- Teach family members how to use text messaging (also known as SMS or Short Message Service). Text messages can often get around network disruptions when a phone call might not be able to get through.
- Subscribe to alert services. Many communities now have systems that will send instant text alerts or e-mails to let you know about bad weather, road closings, local emergencies, etc.

Obviously they've never heard of EMP. My friend was right, assume the position and kiss your butt goodbye.

The average American can't handle any serious disaster for very long. They can probably get by for three days at most. Those that do prepare are looked down upon and expected to share what they have with others. I'll share – bullets – one at a time. We preppers have more to worry about than the Russians, Chinese, Iranians, Al Qaeda or our government. We need to be worried about our neighbors, too. The ones who make the most fun of you while you're preparing will be the first ones at your door when TSHTF. What do you plan to do when they get insistent? I know what I'm going to do, switch the safety off.

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What happened after that? It's not complicated; we survived, one day at a time. Probably half the time, some of Katy's family was down to visit. I think they were really just checking on us to see how we were getting by. One Saturday, we went up to Springfield for a family picnic. It was a big to-do, hamburgers and hot dogs for the kids and steaks for the adults. It was held at Justin and Jeanie's. Instead of the usual picnic fare, there were baked potatoes, Caesar salad and the New York Strips. Over the course of the afternoon, a heated discussion arose.

"Any idea of who won this war?" I asked.

“Nobody wins a full out global thermonuclear war, Ted,” Justin said.

“I beg to differ with you brother, maybe nobody won but some lost worse than others.”

“How do you figure that Rob?”

“I was monitoring the 40 meter band and a ham with a handle of COB was talking to another sailor. Anyway, he said that the Minuteman missiles were launched and several aircraft were sortied carrying the B 61-7 bombs with the 150kT yields. Using tanker assets, the fighters were able to reach their intended targets and drop their bombs. The boomers were standing by for a second wave when NCA issued an ELF order for them to stand down. He also mentioned something called Perimetr or Dead Hand. It seems that the Russians had maintained their fail deadly system and a Chinese nuke took out the Russians central communications system.

“The way fail deadly works is without specific orders not to launch, once activated, the system automatically launches when communications are cut off. So some poor Russian Lieutenant or Captain sitting in a bunker or at a control console had no choice except to launch when their system went down. I can’t imagine someone discussing that kind of stuff, it’s got to be top secret or higher. The US ended up using all of the Minuteman missiles remaining and the fighters to deliver the ordnance. He said we still have all 14 boomers fully loaded and the 4 SSGNs are at sea carrying TLAM-Ns.

“He went on to claim that China, North Korea, Iran and Israel all took hits as did the US. He said that, in his experience, anyone left after the exchange was in the superior position because they could carry out follow up attacks if necessary.”

“Did he discuss how badly this country was hit?”

“Yes and no. It seems that select military installations were hit plus most of the major population centers. Strictly from a military standpoint, we still have the capability to conduct additional attacks if called for. His best guess was that the NCA was secure in Cheyenne Mountain and the so called shadow government was spread out amongst multiple bunkers, including the Greenbrier.”

“But that one was public knowledge.”

“All the more reason to use it, nobody would attack a decommissioned bunker.”

“Did they hit Whiteman Air Force Base?”

“Apparently so, but not because of the missile silos but because it’s the home base for the B-2 fleet which had been moved. Some went to Guam and the remainder to Groom Lake. The B-52s and the B-1Bs were moved to undisclosed locations, but he thought maybe either Groom or Edwards because of the dry lakes.”

“So what’s the bottom line? Are we still the most powerful nation in the world or a third world country because of the loss of our infrastructure?”

“Yes, a bit of both. Apparently the GPS satellites are functioning; at least enough so the system is still up. Orders have been issued to commence a cleanup of the attacked locations but there are too many to do the cleanup very fast. If there’s bright spot in all of this, someone took out the UN.”

“So, when should we expect to see FEMA?”

“Probably never. Another ham reported that the Missouri National Guard was doing its best to distribute food and medical supplies. Apparently the Governor told the President to stick it when the Executive Orders were announced. The Governors of Missouri and Kentucky combined forces because Kentucky has several armor units as does Texas. Arkansas has a significant artillery contingent and the Arkansas, Missouri and Kentucky Guards are working together.

“The Governor of Texas and their legislature have announced their intent to secede from the US and return to a Republic. Active duty military have been offered a choice, join the Texas Guard or leave. I also heard that Bush the younger was working with the current Governor to help that effort along.”

“There goes the country.”

“I guess so but Oklahoma was asked and agreed to join the reformed Republic of Texas. Only three locations in Missouri were hit, Independence/Kansas City, St. Louis and Whiteman ABF. Kansas took another hit in Wichita, probably due to the aircraft industry located there.”

“Do you have a list of where we were hit?”

“It’s a work in progress. No one seems to have the full picture or if they do, aren’t telling. On the West coast, Seattle, Portland, San Francisco, Los Angeles and San Diego. Holoman ABF for sure, Phoenix, Denver, Offutt AFB, Chicago, Cleveland, Atlanta and New York City in addition to Washington, DC. If I recall correctly, Philadelphia, and Boston were also hit, as was Norfolk.”

“What about Texas?”

“Dallas, Fort Worth, Houston and three military sites, Fort Bliss, Fort Sam Houston and Fort Hood. They also attacked MCLB Barstow and Albany. That’s about all I can recall at the moment. Barstow and Albany were reshuffled due to BRAC 2005. I haven’t heard, but you can probably include Groton, Bangor and Kings Bay. Oh, before I forget, I picked up a good used McMillan TAC-50.”

“What did that run?”

“Seventy-five hundred including 5 cans of Barrett M-33.”

“How much Mk-211 do you want?”

Why That One – Chapter 9

“How much can you spare?”

“We’ll start off with five 120-round cans and take it from there.”

“That should work; it will give me a full load out of 10 loaded magazines plus 11 reloads of the anti-material round. Can you get more ammo?”

“I’m not sure I’ll need it. The M-33 was assembled in Lake City and comes 120 rounds per can. That gives me a total of 1,200 rounds.”

“If that M-33 doesn’t shoot to the same spot as the Mk-211, let me know and I’ll swap you even for M1022.”

“Justin, the potatoes and salad are ready.”

“Ok honey; let me get them on the grill. If you’ll excuse me, I better get the steaks on the grill. Listen up folks, I going to start grilling. Anyone who wants anything other than medium let me know.”

Before I forget, COB probably means Chief of the Boat. The baking potatoes were huge and the last time I’d seen one that big was at Costco in St. Peters, packed 20# to the bag. Fifteen minutes later, Justin told everyone to grab a plate and he’d dole out the steaks. He even let each of us choose which steak we wanted. They were all cooked to a perfect medium and sat on the grill for a few minutes allowing the blood to spread through the meat.

Since the asteroid strike and the war came in the same timeframe, I lumped them together and silently told myself, “That’s one.” I mean, let’s face it, if only two things happened, I could always go back split the events into separate incidents.

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In view of that discussion at the picnic, I spent more time listening to the Kenwood. Justin and Rob gave me list of frequencies and times the other hams were usually on the air. As time passed, I learned that the US-Canadian border had been closed and that fighter aircraft were patrolling our southern border with Mexico. The Air Force was using A-10s, our slow movers, spaced out in about 30 minute intervals. They couldn’t make the trip along the full border and were subject to airborne refueling every 500 miles. Their weapons load included that 30mm cannon, a pair of Mk-20 cluster dispensers and the remaining pylons were filled with 500-pound GBU-12s. Apparently, someone got off their behind and began a concerted effort to protect our southern border. Did that someone know something that the public in general didn’t? Fuel was precious after the war and there had to be some reason to burn it up. The majority of the A-10s were flown

by Air National Guard units. At least they were during the war with Iraq. The Canadian border was being patrolled by CF/A-18s.

A few of the clear channel AM stations were back on the air, reporting what they could glean from multiple sources. Neither Katy nor I had heard anything attributed to unnamed military sources. The American public was being stonewalled, again. A bill was rushed through the legislatures of the 4 states and state defense forces were established.

The US Constitution, coupled with several statutory and case laws, details the relationship of state defense forces to the federal government. Outside of 32 USC §109, the US Supreme Court ruled: "It is true that the state defense forces 'may not be called, ordered, or drafted into the armed forces.' 32 USC §109(c). It is nonetheless possible that they are subject to call under 10 USC §§331-333, which distinguish the 'militia' from the 'armed forces,' and which appear to subject all portions of the 'militia' - organized or not - to call if needed for the purposes specified in the Militia Clauses." (Source: Wiki – State Defense Forces)

While it wasn't quite draft or conscription, every male between the ages of 17 through 45 was being recruited and those with military experience could apply through age 55. Katy and I discussed it, and then drove up to Springfield to check with her family. About 1/3 to 1/2 of her family intended to volunteer. While I was pushing the upper age limit due to my lack of military experience, she agreed to allow me to apply. The deal was you provided your personal weapons and the state would supply uniforms, ammunition and training. Any gaps in your equipment would be filled if the needed items were available.

I swapped out the muzzle brake of the M1A for a NM flashhider with bayonet lug. It took a while to find the M-6 bayonet. Having acquired it, I was unimpressed. So, in addition to the bayonet, I supplied my own Bowie knife. Long ago, when I was still married to her, I went to Ventura and picked up a Laredo Bowie. It had taken quite a while to get the upper false blade as sharp as the lower blade; although, when I finished I could shave with either edge (and nick myself with both).

That gave me two fixed blade knives and I added my two bladed Case knife carried in a scabbard on the LBE. The least expensive LBE I could find was ALICE gear. I got a used M-16 holster for the Taurus and three double magazine pouches for the pistol magazines and some off brand magazine pouches that would carry 3 M14/M1A magazines. I added a compass pouch and an oversized bandage pouch plus a Leatherman.

The magazine pouches could each carry a pair of M-67s, giving me a total of 8 M67s in addition to white, green and red smoke hanging off my web gear. I added a large sized ALICE pack, with frame, and a fanny pack for extra ammo. I also added a 100 ounce Camelbak, 2 one quart canteens, a cup and a stove with several packages of the alcohol tablets in my fanny pack.

Both Rob and Justin had some surplus bandoleers and stripper clips which I loaded with the M118LR. Neither of them intended to volunteer because of their ages. I planned to carry a backup piece, my M1A, the 590A1, the Taurus. It was going to be a real challenge considering the amount of ammo I set out which included: 4 cases Mk211MP, 4 cases of M1022, 500 hundred rounds of Gold Dot, 12-gauge slugs, 00 and #4 buckshot. Katy agreed, reluctantly, to allow me to use her Glock model 30 for backup.

There was a recruiting office in Springfield and I filled out the application and was given a physical. Next, they ran a medical history to determine if I had any disqualifying medical conditions. I didn't and within 4 hours of reporting, was sworn in as a sniper. What followed was an abbreviated version of basic training, with classroom instruction and use of our weapons. It was old information but I got the general idea. I was then moved to a sniper training program, also abbreviated. We were given the basics and spent most of our time on the firing range.

When we finished, we were allowed go home, provided we supplied a means of communication. I selected two frequencies in the 40 meter band and the information was added to my growing personnel file. If a call went out for the Missouri Militia, we had 24 hours, maximum, to report to our designated locations.

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Are you a fan of Robert A. Heinlein? He wrote this in 1946 (Opus 039):

HOW TO BE A SURVIVOR: The Art of Staying Alive in the Atomic Age

Thought about your life insurance lately?

Wait a minute – sit back down! We don't want to sell you any insurance.

Let's put it another way: How's your pioneer blood these days? Reflexes in fine shape? Muscle tone good? Or do you take a taxi to go six blocks?

How are you at catching rabbits? The old recipe goes, "First, catch the rabbit – " Suppose your supper depended on catching a rabbit? Then on building a fire without matches? Then on cooking it? What kind of shape will you be in after the corner delicatessen is atomized?

When a committee of Senators asked Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer whether or not a single attack on the United States could kill forty million people, he testified, "I am afraid it is true."

This is not an article about making the atom bomb safe for democracy. This is an article about you – and how you can avoid being one of the forty million knocked off in the first attack in World War III. How, if worse comes to worst, you can live through the next war, survive the aftermath, and build a new life.

If you have been reading the newspapers you are aware that World War III, if it ever comes, is expected to start with an all-out surprise attack by long-distance atomic bombing on the cities of America. General Marshall's final report included this assumption, General Arnold has warned us against such an attack, General Spaatz has described it and told us that it is almost impossible to ward it off if it ever comes. Innumerable scientists, especially the boys who built the A-bomb, have warned us of it.

From the newspapers you may also have gathered that world affairs are not in the best of shape – the Balkans, India, Palestine, Iran, Argentina, Spain, China, The East Indies, etc., etc. – and the UNO does not seem as yet to have a stranglehold on all of the problems that could lead to another conflict.

Maybe so, maybe not – time will tell. Maybe we will form a real World State strong enough to control the atom bomb. If you are sure there will never be war again, don't let me waste your time. But if you think it possible that another Hitler or Tojo might get hold of the atomic bomb and want to try his luck, then bend an ear and we'll talk about how you and your kids can live through it. We'll start with the grisly assumption that the war will come fast and hard, when it comes, killing forty million or so at once, destroying the major cities, wrecking most of our industry and utterly disorganizing the rest. We will assume a complete breakdown of government and communication which will throw the survivors – that's you, chum! – on their own as completely as ever was Dan'l Boone.

No government – remember that. The United States will cease to be a fact except in the historical sense. You will be on your own, with no one to tell you what to do and no policeman on the corner to turn to for protection. And you will be surrounded with dangerous carnivores, worse than the grizzlies Daniel Boone tackled – the two-legged kind.

Perhaps we had better justify the assumption of complete breakdown in government. It might not happen, but, if the new Hitler has sense enough to write Mein Kampf, or even to read it as a textbook, he will do his very best to destroy and demoralize us by destroying our government – and his best could be quite efficient. If he wants to achieve political breakdown in his victim, Washington, D.C., will be his prime target, the forty-eight state capitals his secondary targets, and communication centers such as Kansas City his tertiary targets. The results should be roughly comparable to the effect on a man's organization when his head is chopped off.

Therefore, in this bad dream we are having, let us assume no government, no orders from Washington, no fireside chats, no reassurances. You won't be able to write to your congressman, because he, poor devil!, is marked for the kill. You can live through it, he can't. He will be radioactive dust. His profession is so hazardous that there is no need for him to study up on how to snare rabbits.

But you should – if you are smart, you can live through it.

Now as to methods – there is just one known way to avoid being killed by an atomic bomb. The formula is very simple:

Don't be there when it goes off!

Survival methods in the atomic age can be divided into two headings, strategical and tactical. The first or strategical aspect is entirely concerned with how not to be where the bomb is; the second, tactical part has to do with how to keep yourself and your family alive if you live through the destruction of the cities and the government.

Strategy first – the simplest way to insure long life for yourself and family is to move to Honduras or some other small and non-industrialized country, establish yourself there, and quit worrying. It is most unlikely that such places will be subjected to atomic bombardment; if war comes, they will move into the economic and political sphere of the winner, to be sure, but probably without bloodshed, since resistance would be so obviously futile.

However, you probably cannot afford, or feel that you can't afford, any move as drastic as that. (Whether or not you can in truth afford it is a moot point, to be settled by your own notion of the degree of danger. The pre-War refugees from Nazi Germany could not "afford" to flee, either, but events proved the wisdom of doing so. There is an old Chinese adage, "In the course of a long life a wise man will be prepared to abandon his baggage several times." It has never been more true than it is today.)

There are several moves open to you which are less drastic. If you live on a farm or in a small village, several miles – fifty is a good figure – from the nearest large city, rail junction, power dam, auto factory, or other likely military target, strategy largely takes care of itself. If you are blasted, it will probably be an accident, a rocket gone wild, or something equally unforeseeable. If you are not in such a location, you had better make some plans.

Just a moment – a gentleman in the back row has a question. A little louder please. He asks, "Isn't it true that the government is planning to disperse the cities so we will be safe from atomic bombs?"

I don't know – is it? The only figure I have heard mentioned so far is \$250,000,000,000. Quite aside from the question of whether or not large scale dispersion can be made effective, there is still the question as to whether or not Congress would appropriate a quarter of a trillion dollars in peacetime for any purpose. That is a political question, beyond the scope of this discussion. We are concerned here with how you, unassisted, with your two hands, your brain, and your ability to plan ahead, can keep yourself alive during and after any possible Next War.

If you have to live in a large city or other target area, your strategical planning has to be a good bit more detailed, alert, and shifty. You need an emergency home, perhaps an abandoned farm picked up cheaply or a cabin built on government land. What it is de-

depends on the part of the country you live in and how much money you can put into it, but it should be chosen with view to the possibilities it offers of eating off the country – fish, game, garden plot – and it should be near enough for you to reach it on one tank of gasoline. If the tank in your car is too small, have a special one built, or keep enough cans of reserve permanently in the trunk of your car. Your car should also be equipped with a survival kit, but that comes under tactics.

Having selected and equipped your emergency base, you must then, if you are to live in a target area, keep your ear to the ground and your eyes open with respect to world affairs. There will be no time to get out after rockets are launched. You will have to out-guess events. This is a tricky assignment at best and is the principal reason why it is much better to live in the country in the first place, but you stand a fair chance of accomplishing it if you do not insist on being blindly optimistic and can overcome a natural reluctance to make a clean break with your past – business, home, clubs, friends, church – when it becomes evident that the storm clouds are gathering. Despite the tragic debacle at Pearl Harbor, quite a number of people, laymen among them, knew that a war with Japan was coming. If you think you can learn to spot the signs of trouble long enough in advance to jump, you may get away with living on the spot with the X mark.

Let us suppose that you were quick-witted, far sighted, and fast on your feet; you brought yourself and your family safely through the bombing and have them somewhere out in the country, away from the radioactive areas that were targets a short time before. The countryside is swarming with survivors from the edges of the bombed areas, survivors who are hungry, desperate, some of them armed, all of them free of the civilizing restrictions of organized living. Enemy troops, moving in to occupy, may already be present or may be dropping in from the skies any day.

How, on that day, will you feed and protect yourself and your family?

The tactical preparations for survival after the debacle fall mainly into three groups. First is the overhaul of your own bodily assets, which includes everything from joining the YMCA, to get rid of that paunch and increase your wind and endurance, to such things as getting typhoid and cholera shots, having that appendix out, and keeping your teeth in the best shape possible. If you wear glasses, you will need several pairs against the day when there will be no opticians in practice. Second is the acquisition of various materials and tools which you will be unable to make or grow in a sudden, synthetic stone age – items such as a pickax or a burning glass, for example, will be worth considerably more than two college degrees or a diamond bracelet. Third is training in various fundamental pioneer skills, not only how to snare and cook rabbits, but such things as where and when to plant potatoes, how to tell edible fungi from deadly toadstools without trying them on Junior, and how to walk silently.

All these things are necessary, but more important, much more important, is the acquiring of a survival point of view, the spiritual orientation which will enable you to face hardship, danger, cold, and hunger without losing your zest and courage and sense of humor. If you think it is going to be too hard to be worthwhile, if you can't face the pro-

spect of coming back to the ruins of your cabin, burned down by drunken looters, other than with the quiet determination to build another, then don't bother to start. Move to a target area and wait for the end. It does not take any special courage or skill to accept the death that moves like lightning. You won't even have the long walk the steers have to make to get from the stockyard pens to the slaughter-house.

But if your ancestors still move in your bones, you will know that it is worthwhile, just as they did. "The cowards never started and the weaklings died on the way." That was the spirit that crossed the plains, and such was the spirit of every emigrant who left Europe. There is good blood in your veins, compadre!

It is not possible to tell exactly what to do to prepare yourself best to survive, even if this were a book instead of a short article, for the details must depend on the nature of the countryside you must rely on, your opportunities for planning and preparing, the numbers, ages and sex of your dependents if any, your present skills, talents, and physical condition, and whether or not you are at present dispersed from target areas or must plan for such dispersal. But the principles under which you can make your plans and the easiest means by which to determine them can be indicated.

Start out by borrowing your son's copy of the Boy Scout Manual. It is a practical book of the sort of lore you will need. If you can't borrow it because he is not a member of the Scouts, send him down at once and make him join up. Then make him study. Get him busy on those merit badges – woodcraft, cooking, archery, carpentry. Somebody is going to have to make that fire without matches, if that rabbit is ever to be cooked and eaten. See to it that he learns how, from experts. Then make him teach you.

Can you fell a tree? Can you trim a stone? Do you know where to dig a cesspool? Where and how to dig a well? Can you pull a tooth? Can you shoot a rifle accurately and economically? Can you spot tularemia (we are back to that ubiquitous rabbit again!) in cleaning a rabbit? Do you know the rudiments of farming? Given simple tools, could you build a log, or adobe, or rammed-earth, or native-stone cabin from materials at hand and have it be weather-tight, varmint-proof, and reasonably comfortable?

You can't learn all the basic manual trades in your spare time in a limited number of years but you can acquire a jackleg but adequate knowledge of the more important ones, in the time we have left.

But how much time have we?

All we can do is estimate. How long will it be before other nations have the atomic bomb? Nobody knows – one estimate from the men who made it was "two to five years." Dr. Vannevar Bush spoke of "five to fifteen years" while another expert, equally distinguished, mentioned "five or ten years." Major General Leslie Groves, the atom general, thinks it will be a long time.

Let us settle on five years as a reasonable minimum working time. Of course, even if another nation, unfriendly to us, solved the production problems of atomic weapons in that length of time, there still might not be a war for a number of years, nor would there necessarily ever be one. However, since we don't know what world conditions will be like in five years, let's play it safe; let's try to be ready for it by 1950.

Four or five years is none too long to turn a specialized, soft, city dweller into a generalized, hardened pioneer. However, it is likely that you will find that you are enjoying it. It will be an interesting business and there is a deep satisfaction in learning how to do things with your own hands.

First get that Scout Manual. Look over that list of merit badges. Try to figure out what skills you are likely to need, what ones you now have, and what ones you need to study up on. The Manual will lead you in time to other books. Ernest Thompson Seton's *Two Little Savages* is full of ideas and suggestions.

Presently you will find that there are handbooks of various trades you have not time to master; books which contain information you could look up in an emergency if you have had the forethought to buy the book and hide it away in your out-of-town base. There are books which show how to build fireplaces, giving the exact dimensions of reflector, throat, ledge, and flue. You may not remember such details; being able to look them up may save you from a winter in a smoke-filled cabin. If there is any greater domestic curse than a smoking fireplace, I can't recall it, unless it be the common cold.

There are little handbooks which show, in colored pictures, the edible mushrooms and their inedible cousins. It is possible to live quite well on practically nothing but fungi, with comparatively little work; they exist in such abundance and variety.

You will need a medical reference book, selected with the advice of a wise and imaginative medical man. Tell him why you want it. Besides that, the best first-aid and nursing instruction you can get will not be too much. Before you are through with this subject you will find yourself selecting drugs, equipment, and supplies to be stored against the darkness, in your base as well as a lesser supply to go into the survival kit you keep in your automobile.

What goes into that survival kit, anyhow? You will have to decide; you won't take any present advice in any case. By the time you get to it you will think, quite correctly, that you are the best judge. But the contents of the survival kits supplied our aviators in this latest war will be very illuminating. The contents varied greatly, depending on climate and nature of mission – from pemmican to quinine, fish hooks to maps.

What to put in your cabin is still more difficult to state definitely. To start with, you might obtain a Sears-Roebuck or Montgomery-Ward catalog and go through it, item by item. Ask yourself "Do I have to have this?", then from the list that produces ask yourself "Could I make this item, or a substitute, in a pinch?"

If shoes wear out, it is possible to make moccasins – although shoes should be hoarded in preference to any other item of clothing. But you can't – unless you are Superman – make an ax. You will need an ax.

You will need certain drugs. Better be liberal here.

Salt is difficult to obtain, inland.

It is difficult to reject the idea of hoarding canned goods. A few hundred dollars' worth, carefully selected, could supplement the diet of your family to the point of luxury for several years. It might save you from starvation, or the cannibalism that shamed the Donner Party, during your first winter of the Dark Ages, and it could certainly alleviate some of the sugar hunger you are sure to feel under most primitive conditions. But it is a very great risk to have canned goods. If you have them, you will be one of the hated rich if anybody finds out about them. We are assuming that there will be no government to protect you. To have canned goods – and have it known by anyone outside your own household – is to invite assassination. If you do not believe that a man will commit murder for one can of tomatoes, then you have never been hungry.

If you have canned goods, open them when the windows are shuttered and bury the cans. Resist the temptation to advertise your wealth by using the empty tins as receptacles.

Don't forget a can opener – two can openers.

You will have a rifle, high-powered and with telescopic sights, but you won't use it much. Cartridges are nearly irreplaceable. A deer or a man should be about the limit of the list of your targets...a deer when you need meat; a man when hiding or running is not enough.

That brings us to another subject and the most interesting of all. We have not talked much about the enemy, have we? And yet he was there, from the start. It was his atom bombs which reduced you to living off the country and performing your own amputations and accouchements. If you have laid your plans carefully, you won't see much of him for quite a while; this is a very, very big country. Where you are hidden out there never were very many people at any time; the chances of occupation forces combing all of the valleys, canyons, and hills of our back country in less than several years is negligible. It is entirely conceivable that an enemy could conquer or destroy our country, as a state, in twenty minutes, with atom bomb and rocket. Yet, when his occupation forces move in, they will be almost lost in this great continent. He may not find you for years.

There is your chance. It has been proved time and again, by the Fighting French, the recalcitrant Irish, the deathless Poles, yes and by our own Apache and Yaqui Indians, that you cannot conquer a free man; you can only kill him.

After the immediate problems of the belly, comes the Underground!

You'll need your rifle. You will need knives. You will need dynamite and fuses. You will need to know how to turn them into grenades. You must learn how to harry the enemy in the dark, how to turn his conquest into a mockery, too expensive to exploit. Oh, it can be done, it can be done! Once he occupies, his temporary advantage of the surprise attack with the atom bomb is over, for once his troops are scattered among you, he cannot use the atom bomb.

Then is your day. Then is the time for the neighborhood cell, the mountain hideout, the blow in the night. Yes, and then is the time for the martyr to freedom, the men and women who die painfully, with sealed lips.

Can we then win our freedom back? There is no way of telling. History has some strange quirks. It was a conflict between England and France that gave us our freedom in the first place. A quarrel in enemy high places, a young hopeful feeling his oats and anxious to displace the original dictator, might give us unexpected opportunity, opportunity we could exploit if we were ready.

There are ways to study for that day, too. There are books, many of them, which you may read to learn how other people have done it. One such book is Tom Wintringham's *New Ways of War*. It is almost a blueprint of what to do to make an invader wish he had stayed at home. It is available in a 25 cent Penguin Infantry Journal edition. You can study up and become quite deadly, even though 4-F, or fifty.

If you plan for it, you can survive. If you study and plan and are ready to organize when the time comes, you can hope not only to survive but to play a part in winning back lost freedoms. General George Washington once quoted Scripture to describe what we were fighting for then – a time when “everyone shall sit in safety under his own vine and fig tree, and none shall make him afraid!”

It is worth planning for.

“A person, who won't be blackmailed, can't be blackmailed.” – Lazarus Long

Kurt Saxon wasn't the first survivalist nor was James Wesley Rawles, it was Robert A. Heinlein.

Why That One – Chapter 10

What does that have to do with our present situation? Everything, it's a blueprint, if you will. Some of his essay seems to be so antiquated for the second decade of the twenty-first century. Before 1968, most of the gun control involved machine guns, silencers and sawed off shotguns. Worse, the National Firearms Act was unconstitutional and would have been so ruled in Miller if the attorney had put in an appearance at the Supreme Court. But, he didn't and the government lied (not for the first or last time) and a \$125 Chicago Typewriter suddenly cost \$325, not counting sales tax. Of course, that solved everything, the gangsters were lined up to get their tax stamps. In 1934, \$200 was a lot of money and only the gangsters had that kind of pocket money.

If William W. Johnstone were to be believed, two weapons, the Thompson submachine gun aka Chicago Typewriter and M14 rifle aka the Thunder Lizard, were musts for everyone's armory in a PAW. If you could find a full auto Thompson, say the 1928 that took the drum, it would probably cost you twenty grand or more. It would be too valuable to use and 100 rounds of .45acp would make the sucker heavy. On the upside, all you needed was .45acp for your pistol and submachine gun plus shells for your shotgun and cartridges for your M14 (M1A). KISS (Keep it simple, stupid).

For preppers, such as we, it was never if, just when and what. Maybe TOM was right and God did have a sense of humor. The evidence was there, if a person just looked. He gave us free choice, but assigned consequences. It seemed that every faith took a different approach to how they worshiped the Lord. Some appointed priests who did the majority of the worshipping and led their congregations step-by-step through the rituals. On the opposite end of the Christian faith, one found Churches like the United Methodist Church which seemed to be totally unstructured. They were probably just cleverer in hiding their structure.

People closely tied to the denominations tended to have closed minds to the belief of others, overlooking the central fact, that both denominations were Christian Churches. The more loosely structured a church seemed to be, the greater latitude its members had. A prime example of this dichotomy was the Catholic Church vs. the Eastern Orthodox Church, identical and yet very different. The Islamic faith was even more convoluted. The Qur'an accepted all who were people of the Book and yet most that followed Islam had the goal of killing off or converting all Christians and Jews. Or, at least, that's what Grand wrote in *Normal*.

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One day, a few weeks later, a strange thing happened. We were doing target practice when a Honda SUV pulling a U-Haul box trailer pulled up to our driveway and stopped. There was a woman driving and a man in the passenger seat. Standing up between his knees was what I immediately recognized as a M1A. He got out and slung his rifle, muzzle down, on his left shoulder and began to walk our way. He had on quite the get up, a TAC-FORCE vest with the magazine and grenade pouches all filled. He was

wearing a pistol belt with a tan M16 holster. On one strap of the vest a knife was taped, upside down and on the other side, there were two things strapped. They later turned out to be a generic multitool and a pouch containing an AA MagLite and a large 2 bladed Case folding knife. His pistol belt had a huge knife on the left side and there were three double pistol magazine pouches, one on either side of the knife and the third on the other side of the belt buckle. He turned briefly and I also saw 2 one quart canteens and a butt pack. His body did a good job of concealing the Mossberg shotgun hanging muzzle down on his back.

“Hello the range; is it ok if I approach closer? I’m durn near stone deaf, so speak loudly.”

“Who might you be?”

“You can call me Tom.”

“I’d prefer if you’d disarm first.”

“Well, why not.”

“He first laid his boonie hat on the ground and then placed his pistol in it. He followed that by very carefully laying down the rifle, followed by the shotgun. Finally, he pulled both fixed blade knives from their sheaths and laid them by the firearms.

“Good enough?”

“Sure, come on up. I’m Ted and this is my wife Katy. The boys are Steve and Roy.”

“Just looking for directions,” he said. “We have to be close to the Arkansas border; how far is it?”

“About 2-3 miles further down 65.”

“Oh good. It’s been a long trip and we’re headed for a little town named Flippin, Arkansas.”

“Where did you come from?”

“California. It’s bad out and about. We’d detoured so many times, I’ve lost track.”

“Where are you heading, again?”

“Flippin. It’s a burg a way west of Mountain Home on 412.”

“That would be about 60 miles from here. Been traveling long?”

“Yeah, it’s been a full week. My wife Sharon and I loaded up my guns and ammo and all the gasoline and food we could pack in. I’m glad we’re so close; we’re down to our last 5 gallon can. Which model M1A is that you folks have?”

“My wife has the National Match and I have the Super Match.”

“Always wanted a Super Match, but never could afford one. Took me 50 years to buy the one I ended up with, the Loaded.”

Hmm, this guy was setting off bells. Although I doubted it, I had to ask.

“Where in California are you from?”

“Palmdale.”

“Do you know a guy who lives there name Gary Ott?”

“Him? Yeah, I’ve known him for over 67 years. What’s it to you?”

“Are we talking about an author who uses the pseudonym Tired Old Man?”

“The one and same. I’m Tom.”

“You wrote those stories on Frugal’s?”

“Sure did. Long story short, I’m disabled and have mobility problems. Had to do something to fill my days.”

“How much of the stuff you wrote about yourself in your stories was true?”

“The personal details were 100% accurate. We spent a couple of weeks with Ron and Linda on our way here. They live in Prescott Valley, Arizona now. Don’t know where Clarence moved to, some said Birmingham.”

“And you have a son living in Flippin, right?”

“Derek. Promised him my guns when I died and we decided to deliver them in person, just in case. We left Palmdale two days before the balloon went up and were at Ron and Linda’s when it happened. Interesting area, Ruger has a factory in Prescott. Before we left to finish our trip, we went shopping. Got an assortment of Vaqueros right off the factory floor. Checked a couple of gun shops and found some Marlins in the same calibers plus 2 1895 Cowboys. Didn’t get much ammo though, and it was mostly cowboy loads except for the .357.”

“Did you get leather?”

“Nothing fancy, but Ruger has a line of leather products. Actually got a little bit of everything from their factory store. Got some Mini-14s, Mini-30s, some of the new SR-556s and even a few of those new 6.8mm Rem. SPC chambered Mini-14s.”

“Buy them?”

“Salvage.”

“Why am I not surprised?”

“Well...I said I'd do it in almost every story I ever wrote. Ammo may be a problem for some of the calibers. However, ammo won't do you any good unless you have the firearm that takes the cartridge. Don't figure 5.56 will be hard to get. That 6.8 Remington could be a different story. Wouldn't mind some more full power loads for the cowboy guns though. Been hitting gun stores along the way, picking up a box or two, here and there.”

“Do you really have a Nazi .32?”

“Sure do.”

“Your wife got it?”

“No...I've got it. Well, it was nice visiting with you, but we'd better get on our way. Sixty miles could take a few hours if there are more gun stores along the way.”

“Well, I'll be damned.”

“Probably. He's nothing like I imagined. Under 5½' tall, probably weighs 150 soaking wet. I don't know what kind of mobility problem he has, other than walking very slow.”

“Did you see his .32 auto?”

“No, you?”

“Uh un. Probably has it in the middle of his back in an IWB holster.”

“He was charming; maybe honest would be a better word.”

“He certainly didn't conceal the fact that he was salvaging.”

“I'll bet he gets with his son and they make a trip to Fort Chaffee to do some shopping.”

“Just the usual suspects?”

“Only if he can't find M-61s.”

And the ammo; he said the grenade pouches each contain either 37 or 38 rounds of that 8 pellet Remington reduced recoil 00. Then, he went on to talk about the Brenneke slugs he had. Said he'd seen an ad in a LEO magazine back in '70. He explained his shotgun ammo, a case each of flechettes and slugs plus 2 cases of the low recoil 00. He had two cases of .45 ammo, one of Speer Lawman and one of Gold Dot, both 230gr. He also said he had 30 bricks of .22, divided equally between round point, hollow point and some hyper velocity.

Their food supplies consisted of 125# of pinto beans and 20# each of kidney, great northern, navy and the small pink beans called pinquito. They also had, 100# of bread flour, yeast, sugar, 60 cans of Folgers, salt, pepper, cornstarch and some corn bread mixes.

He didn't mention whether or not he'd gotten his Barrett. I asked which scope he had on his rifle and he told me it was Leupold 4.5x14 Mark-IV scope. He said if he needed to use it as a sniper rifle, he'd either use 1685gr SPBT or 168gr HP from Black Hills. His everyday ammo was SA surplus and he only loaded 18 rounds in the T-57 magazines. For Close Quarters, he could switch out the Leupold with an Aimpoint. Well ok, but a full sized M1A isn't a CQC weapon.

They left and I figured that we'd never hear from them again. We were done shooting so we policed our brass and went up to the cabin for lunch. I had a thousand questions I wanted to ask but couldn't think of a single one, at the time. His rifle had an unusual muzzle brake on it, not the standard Springfield Armory muzzle brake. Don't suppose he actually had a suppressor do you? For an old man with mobility problems, he was carrying quite the load; three, or was it four, firearms, at least three knives, a flashlight, a multitool and only God knows what else.

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We went up to Springfield once a week, mostly on Saturdays. I told anyone who was willing to listen about my experience with Tired Old Man. A couple kiddingly asked if he was wearing tights, a shirt that had a large letter 'S' on it and a cape. I explained he must have had something wrong with his hands and feet and was reminded that he claimed to have diabetic neuropathy.

Nope, he was just little old man with salt and pepper hair carrying about 1/3 of his body weight in weapons and ammo, who said he heard the shooting and was checking to see if anyone needed help. I could understand the rifle and shotgun; if he had trouble with his hands, why choose a .45acp pistol? The grips aren't particularly ergonomic and can be a hand full. However since our armory contained the same weapons, how could I say anything to him?

Since we had gathered all of the semis from Springfield to the Fort, our next task would be to gather all of the semis between Springfield and half way to Tulsa. We weren't

soon enough to get all of them, some trucks had been opened and gone through, generally haphazardly, especially food delivery trucks. Our first run down and back was to look for tankers. Ponca City wasn't that far from Tulsa and it had a refinery. Don, Justin, Katy and I made the trips, leaving Steve and Roy with her mother. We took some bottles of PRI-D, just in case, and jumper cables. Sometimes we had to tinker to get the trucks to run, but not often.

Katy was again entering waypoints for trucks we wanted to check over after we had the tankers corralled. The first food truck we found had been stripped bare, but we took the truck and trailer anyway with Don driving. The next one we came to was one of those haphazard salvage jobs and we transferred the stuff to our empty truck and left it sit. Further on, we found a full Wal-Mart truck and Justin drove it. Rather than split up and reduced our firepower, we ran a convoy to the next waypoint and found another grocery truck, intact. That finished the south bound lanes and we decided to sort everything and stabilize the fuel before we went back.

We unloaded both the Wal-Mart truck and the grocery trucks. Katy's family pitched in and we sorted everything and kept anything that would freeze in the construction building. Then we divided up the contents of the Wal-Mart truck and one of the grocery trucks, replacing and adding to our LTS food supplies. We were set to go back for the northbound trucks when a blizzard hit and it got down to 10 above.

When it cleared, the whole family pitched in and we brought back all the trucks remaining. We were just plain lucky, only a few of the canned goods froze and burst. Those cans went to Justin and Rob for Jeanie and Anne to put to good use. The food was ok because we hadn't had a warm spell since the cans had burst.

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"Ted, have you done any long range shooting with the Barrett?"

"Five hundred yards, but nothing further."

"Justin and I were talking and we located a place where we can set up a shooting range out to 2,000 meters."

"That must be over a mile."

"About a mile and a quarter. Want to get the various scope settings for out to 2,000 meters?"

"Well...I suppose I should get the settings and find out just how far I can accurately shoot. You're going to use the Tac-50?"

"Justin is; I swapped some fuel and food for a Barrett model 95 bullpup."

“How’s that shoot?”

“Haven’t tried it out yet so I have no idea. Typical Barrett runs 1.5MOA except for the model 99 which is under 1. Bring a few cans of the M1022 and Mk-211; I’ll need them now that I have a rifle to shoot the stuff.”

Justin explained why he had gotten the Tac-50 instead of a Barrett:

When the Department of Homeland Security evaluates special tactical police units, one critical factor is the presence or absence of a .50BMG caliber precision rifle. At first blush, a .50BMG rifle may seem to be overkill in an urban or even rural environment, but there are certain situations when nothing else will do.

For example, subjects barricaded behind barriers that are impervious to smaller calibers can be defeated with a .50 caliber rifle. Situations where terrorists have taken over the cockpit of an airliner can be resolved only by using a .50 caliber rifle, since the wind-screens of large aircraft are designed to resist impacts similar to those of smaller caliber bullets. In banks and other facilities where bullet-resistant glass is employed, only a .50BMG caliber rifle can eliminate threats. So while some might think of the .50 as unnecessary in law enforcement, the opposite is true.

While situations calling for a .50 caliber rifle may be infrequent, when they do occur, it is too late to have a tactical team precision marksman trained in the use of the big rifle. Unlike the famous LA shootout where officers borrowed semi-automatic rifles from sporting goods stores, .50BMG rifles aren’t exactly common, not even in gun stores. Moreover, if a .50BMG rifle is to be employed at all, the responsible team member must be trained in its use and maintain his proficiency so that when the worst happens, the team’s .50BMG rifle can be used effectively with little fear of legal repercussions due to lack of training or proficiency.

One of the most popular .50BMG rifles in military and law enforcement is the McMillan Tac-50. This rifle is in use by the US Navy, where it carries the designation Mark 15 and by many military forces worldwide. The Tac-50 is a combat-proven rifle that delivers pinpoint accuracy with the right ammo.

Another factor in the use of a .50BMG rifle is ammunition. Commonly available ammunition includes ball, armor piercing (AP), armor piercing incendiary (API) and plain match ammunition. Of the US military issue ammo, API is commonly considered to be the most accurate, although for law enforcement operational use, the incendiary effect must be taken into consideration. The Army has a match-grade round for its M107 rifles, designated the XM1022 and made by Lake City Army Ammunition Plant. The XM1022 is designed to ballistically match the Mk 211 round, but without the incendiary and explosive terminal effects of the MK.211. For most situations, we recommend match-grade ammunition that will defeat hard targets.

When it comes to rifles suitable for use against hard targets, the selection is limited. One of these is McMillan's Tac-50, the subject of this evaluation. The Tac-50 is understandably a large rifle. When dealing with a cartridge that fires a half-inch-diameter bullet weighing as much as 750 grains, the rifle that shoots it is going to be big and heavy. The Tac-50 is nearly 60 inches in length with a 29-inch chrome molybdenum steel barrel, although the rifle can easily be taken down into two.

As tested, weight of our Tac-50 was 26 pounds including scope, mount and bipod, so this is clearly not a rifle that is going to be fired offhand from the standing position. In fact, there are very few rifles in this class that can be fired in any position other than some sort of supported position, usually prone, although the military has vehicular pedestal mounts for its .50 caliber rifles. The Tac-50's weight is one factor that contributes to the lack of felt recoil, but more important is the rifle's aggressive muzzle brake that counters recoil by essentially pulling the rifle forward as the bullet leaves the muzzle.

We fired about 50 rounds from our test Tac-50 during zeroing and testing, and felt recoil was surprisingly light, similar to a 12 gauge shotgun. While the muzzle brake is very efficient, there is quite a bit of blast to the side and slightly to the rear. One doesn't want to be alongside this rifle when the shooter touches off a round. This is the case with just about all shoulder fired .50BMG rifles; all of them require an efficient muzzle brake to prevent dislocating the shooter's shoulder.

The Tac-50 has some unique features that set it apart from many other .50BMG rifles. First, the Tac-50 is built to match specifications for optimum accuracy. The barrel threads and chamber are cut to the tightest specifications possible while still maintaining reliability. The barrel and bolt axis are perfectly aligned and the bolt face and action faces are absolutely perpendicular to the barrel axis. The action is pillar bedded into the stock and the fluted 29-inch barrel is fully free-floated over its entire length.

Fluting provides greater surface areas for improved cooling and weight reduction without affecting barrel stiffness. The recoil lug is surface ground on both sides and pinned to the receiver for a perfectly square mating between the barrel shank and action face. The bolt handle is extended for ease of extracting and is designed to clear large diameter optics commonly used on .50BMG rifles.

The bolt has spiral grooves so that any grit is held there rather than getting into the rifle's action. The removable stock is fully adjustable for cheek rest height and length-of-pull (LOP).

For our test optic, we added one of Premier Reticles' new Heritage 3-15x50mm tactical scopes, designed from the ground up as a tactical scope for the most demanding applications, such as our test Tac-50. The Heritage incorporates Premier Reticles' patented illuminated Gen II Mil-Dot reticle with 11 brightness settings and a locking illumination dial for storage in the "off" position. Parallax adjustment is via a side turret that gives a sharp image focus from 50 meters to infinity and can be adjusted by the shooter without changing position on the rifle.

The windage and elevation adjustments feature Lever-Lock dial retention for re-zeroing without using special tools. Adjustments are in 1-milliradian per click for a total of 77-MOA elevation with a single turret turn and 55-MOA windage on a single turret turn. The 34mm Heritage scope tube is constructed from a single 6061-T6 aircraft aluminum tube. Premier Reticles Heritage scopes have a lifetime warranty.

Current US Marine Corps standard night vision optic is Optical Systems Technology Inc's AN/PVS-27 Magnum Universal Night Sight (MUNS). The AN/PVS-27 mounts on any MIL-STD-1913 rail ahead of the day optic eliminating the need for illuminated reticles.

The MUNS incorporates a fully Mil-Spec Gen III+ Pinnacle image intensifier tube. Auto-gated NVS automatically adjust to incoming light, eliminating "halos" and "blooms" around high contrast objects. The f/1.0 lens gives a bright sharp image in starlight and gathers twice as much light as the other OSTI military NVS, the AN/PVS-22 Universal Night Sight (UNS).

The AN/PVS-27 can be used against targets at 1.5 times the distance of the PVS-22. The MUNS can detect a vehicle in starlight at an incredible 3150 meters (just under two miles) and a human at 1350 meters (almost a mile). The MUNS mounts and dismounts without tools via LaRue Tactical QD lever mounts. The MUNS incorporates OSTI's proprietary and patent pending Shock Mitigation System (SMS) that can reduce the weapon's induced shock applied to the image intensifier by up to a factor of ten without any additional boresight error.

This significantly increases the service life of the intensifier and allows the night vision weapon sight to be used on any .50 caliber bolt-action weapon such as the McMillan. The on-axis shock produced by the McMillan without a muzzle brake is nearly 2000 g's, which exceeds the image intensifier manufacturer's (ITT Night Vision) maximum shock specification. The SMS reduces the shock level to be in warranty compliance even for large bore weapons of this type. Besides being arguably the most effective image intensification weapon sight on the planet, the MUNS can also be used as a handheld night vision optic or used in conjunction with a spotting scope.

The Tac-50 is a conventional bolt-action rifle in the sense that it has a reciprocating manually operated bolt with two forward locking lugs and a safety lug that is integrated into the operating handle. The extractor is Sako type, the ejector is the plunger type. Our Tac-50 placed every spent casing in a small pile about 5 inches from the right of the rifle. Ejection was positive, the spent casings literally fell off the rifle and dropped to the ground. The receiver's top surface is fitted with a 30-MOA MIL-STD-1913 rail for mounting optics. The trigger breaks at 3 pounds with zero creep or backlash and is fully adjustable. The buttstock, which is adjustable for length of pull (LOP), can be removed to simplify transportation. The cheekrest is fully adjustable for height as is the buttstock. Shooting the Tac-50 was a real pleasure. We tested the Tac-50 at 100 yards because in law enforcement scenarios engagements at distances beyond that will occur rarely, if

ever. The aggressive muzzle brake combined with the rifle's weight reduces the .50BMG's felt recoil to approximately 12 gauge level. Like any rifle having such a device, however, it is not advisable to be alongside when the cartridge is touched off and the muzzle brake does its job by diverting gases to the side and rear. The blast is not particularly noticeable to the shooter, who is directly behind it, but when on the range, the Tac-50 shooter should be careful to choose a firing point with vacancies on both sides of the rifle.

The Tac-50's single-stage trigger broke at 3 pounds and had absolutely no creep or backlash. The Tac-50 was extremely accurate and delivered MOA from the very first shots fired. We tested the Tac-50 with Athena AP2 armor piercing match (1.25-inch group), Extreme Shock (Mullins) Match (1.4-inch group) and Summit Match (1.5-inch group). Bear in mind that each of these bullets is a half-inch in diameter, so group size center to center is relative. We didn't chronograph our test ammo because .50BMG muzzle blast would almost certainly have damaged or destroyed our chronograph.

GI ball in either M8 or M33 is notoriously inaccurate. We advise against using it, not even for practice because it has different ballistics from whatever match-grade duty ammo the agency authorizes. Like anything else, when it comes to ammunition, use only the best available. Remember that your rifle is only as good as the ammunition you put through it. All of our match grade ammo delivered good results. The Athena AP2 armor piercing is expensive and no longer being imported.

We say unfortunately because as far as we know, it was the only match grade AP round available. The US Army has developed the XM1022, a match-grade ball round for use with the M107 anti-materiel rifle. The XM1022 is ballistically matched to the Mk211 Mod 0 HEIAP (High Explosive Incendiary Armor Piercing) round. The XM1022 uses a match-grade bullet similar to that of the Athena AP2, but without the armor penetrator. This round is not commercially available as of this writing.

That said, any .50BMG match round is going to deliver terminal ballistics, which completely overshadow those from any other shoulder-fired rifle. When the tactical situation calls for a .50BMG, just about any match round is acceptable because armor steel will almost never be encountered in a civilian or law enforcement environments.

The McMillan Tac-50 offers the competitive or law enforcement shooter an accurate and reliable .50BMG rifle at a cost that may be considered somewhat pricey for a bolt-action rifle, but considering the Tac-50's features, the cost seems reasonable. The Tac-50 is rugged, well made, well finished and accurate, although like any .50BMG rifle, it is on the heavy side.

We tested a McMillan MCRT .308 rifle nearly two years ago and the Tac-50 continues the McMillan tradition of high quality and rock solid reliability. Since the Tac-50 is in widespread use by the Special Operations community with the designation Mark 15 along with numerous military forces worldwide, it clearly meets the highest military requirements for accuracy and reliability. For law enforcement, it doesn't get any better.

Why That One – Chapter 11

“So you got it on the basis of a review you read?”

“Don’t most people? However, I did a lot of reading and it’s the only rifle guaranteed to shoot 0.5MOA. That M-33 ammo I have doesn’t shoot well. Could I get some of the M1022 to go with the Mk-211 I got from you?”

We ended up discussing the accuracy claims that the various manufacturers made. Accuracy International claimed less than 1MOA. Barrett claimed 1.5MOA and ~1 for the model 99. Even the Armalite AR-50 was very accurate, but a single shot. In the end, it didn’t matter who had the most accurate rifle and best ammunition. It all came down to who had the most time behind their rifle because the only way to do your best is to practice. Although the longest recorded sniper shot made with .50 caliber was made using a Tac-50, little notice was given to ammo used, the Hornady 750gr A-MAX match.

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The MNG showed up sooner than expected. The seven largest cities in Missouri are Kansas City, St. Louis, Springfield, Independence, Columbia, Lee’s Summit, and O’Fallon. The Governor ordered all MNG members to assemble at the Fort. When enough people showed up to do some good, they were issued their equipment and sent out to secure available supplies of food and medicines. They returned to the Fort with whatever they found and it was sorted, stacked, classified, etc. It was a military operation, it took a while.

With three of the four largest cities destroyed, Springfield was the first city supplied with food and supplemental medical supplies. Five months after the war. It gave whole new meaning to the term ‘expedited’. We went to Springfield the day the facility was to get its rations. They had a choice, packaged foods only or a mix of packaged and grains. The grains were packed in gunny sacks and didn’t have specific weight, just whatever the bag would hold. If a person had the means to use raw grain, as we did, they were pretty well set.

We got 4 bags of corn, four bags of wheat, 2 bags of oats plus our selection of spices and/or mixes (like spaghetti sauce mix). They had some canned meat, mostly tuna, ham, corned beef and the like. We did get one full ham per person, Cure 81 no less. Why four bags of corn and wheat? One bag per person, except oats, which were half bags and only equaled 2 bags. We were low on baking powder and baking soda and they weren’t limiting that.

Between what we found up and down I-44 and what the MNG supplied, we were pretty well set, for the moment. Between the canned tomatoes and everything else we produced on our own and what we got from the MNG, we didn’t have any holes in our supplies unless it was livestock feed. Got a truckload of hay for a Krugerrand, delivered, and a load of animal feed mostly made up of oats, corn and soy beans run through a

hammer mill for the same price. However, Justin and Rob showed up a few days later with a load of feed from the ethanol plant. People complain about growing corn to produce ethanol, little realizing that the left over grain is recycled into livestock feed. "Ethanol production uses the starch portion of corn, but the leftover protein can be used to create a high-nutrient, low-cost animal feed."

Corn is primarily livestock feed and if you can process it and get alcohol and still have livestock feed, what's the big deal? They take soybeans and squeeze out the oil for vegetable oil and the end product is soybean meal and it worth a lot more than soy beans. The big deal was that if one added up everything used to produce ethanol using modern technology, the energy yield was less than the amount invested. However, we don't have much technology left since the war. When it wears out or breaks, that's it; you put up the GPS and dig out your compass.

In fact, that's a little mentioned reason for having an older motor vehicle. Sure, a non-electronic diesel will still run after it has been zapped by EMP but more importantly, you need wrenches, not a computer, to fix it. You can actually buy or assemble a kit to rebuild an engine or manual transmission, relatively economically. Get a replacement clutch plate too. I did and so can you. What I can't make, is something like smokeless powder or jacketed bullets or primers. I can reload the brass, even the Berdan primed stuff, but I need the components to do it. Yes all the calibers except the .50BMG and Rob or Justin has those dies.

Speaking of which, Justin must have practiced some because that Tac-50 of his was the most accurate of the 3 rifles. Maybe I should have gotten a bolt action...nah, the one I have was cheaper, just a little diesel fuel. Guess we aren't going back to the Fort if we need more .50BMG ammo. But, Arkansas is only 2 miles away and maybe Independence will get over being hot before we run out.

I can just imagine, had Katy and I had kids of our own, having to answer the question, "Daddy, what did you do in the war?" The answer would be, "Well we hid in the bomb shelter until the radiation died down and then we practiced with our firearms." "Did you shoot anyone?" The answer was, "Not yet." In that respect, I imagine I'm a bit like TOM, loaded down with 50 pounds of gear and nobody shooting at us.

"Since the Guard is at the Fort, where do we get more .50BMG?"

"You out?"

"No Ted, we're not out; in fact all we've used was that we shot when we practiced. We talked it over though, and would sure hate to run low. Anyway, where can we go?"

I thought about it for a moment. My first thought was that these two were about as crazy as some of the people in TOM's yarns, they have to have 15,000 rounds of ammo and only shoot up one or two cans.

“Well, I had the thought that TOM and his son might go to Fort Chaffee. That’s south-east of...”

“We know where Fort Chaffee is, next to Fort Smith. Why there?”

“It’s where his son goes to do his thing with the ANG.”

“Air National Guard?”

“Arkansas Army National Guard. He has a counter-battery MOS in artillery.”

“I thought he was in tanks?”

“That was before he went to Iraq. He had ten years in tanks, although I understood that he was only in tanks full time when he was in Korea. It’s all in those stories, he’s proud of his sons.”

“And he said he was going to Fort Chaffee?”

“No, he said he was going to Flippin; I said they’d probably go to Fort Chaffee. You know, looking for LAW rockets, M-61 hand grenades, M118LR ammo for his rifle.”

“If his son was in tanks, that means he knows the M2HB and the M240.”

“So?”

“I hope they don’t take everything.”

“We need more of anything, really?”

“Would rather have it and not need it than...”

“Ok, we’ll drive down tomorrow.”

Rob had a point. If we had the ammo, it couldn’t be used against us and might make good trade goods. Was it worth a tank of fuel just to check it out? I guess so, the fuel was free and we could probably find some JP-8 at their fuel depot. When we left the next morning, we were driving my pickup, pulling a trailer and also driving an empty double bottomed 16,000-gallon tanker. Why more fuel? It’s a lot like toilet paper and ammunition; you can never have too much as long as you can keep it stabilized. Rob and Justin had cleaned out the supplier and the 5 gallon pails of PRI-G and PRI-D they’d given me were just the tip of the iceberg. They had the stuff in 55-gallon drums with those hand crank pumps that pumped one quart at a time, enough for 512-gallons of fuel.

I'll admit that I didn't want to go to Fort Chaffee because if the MNG was active, the ANG could be active and we might end up in the stockade, or dead. Nonetheless, we left around 0700, planning on arrive by 1000. That gave us 30 minutes for detours. We were keeping in touch with CM-300s, 45 watt Motorola VHF radios that Rob pulled from his construction vehicles and CP-200s, handi talkies. While they lacked the range to reach home, we could become widely separated and keep in touch.

We were doing fine until we got close to Fort Smith and did our best to skirt the eastside of the city. We succeeded, but ended up at the eastern gate. It was closed and we couldn't tell if that were a good sign or not. Apparently the western gate was the primary entrance. I was in the lead and took the bolt cutters to cut the lock, only to find that the lock had already been cut.

"Hey, this lock has already been cut. What do y'all think?"

"It looks like it was set to give the appearance of being undisturbed, probably someone got here before us with the same idea in mind. Do you see anyone around?"

"Negative. Want to risk it?"

"We just drove for over 3 hours to get here. I say go for it."

"Watch my six."

"Click, click."

So, with great trepidation, I opened the gate and drove through. I waited for Rob to pull the tanker forward and closed the gate using the same piece of wire to hold the chain together.

"Where are we going?"

"The fuel depot is the first right and the ammo bunkers are straight ahead. Follow me and we'll start with the bunkers."

"Click, click."

I suppose we drove several miles before we reached the bunkers. We stopped and started to go through them one at a time. Some had the locks cut so we checked those first. I started to get suspicious; one open bunker held hand grenades, flashbangs, smoke, concussion, Thermate and M-67 fragmentation. Didn't see any M-61s, but there was a suspiciously empty spot. We loaded up a gross each of each color of smoke and at least a gross each of the other four kinds.

Three bunkers down, we found another open bunker holding an assortment of rockets, M-72s, M136 AT-4s and Javelins. We pulled the five round boxes from the crates for the

M-72s and took the M136s as packaged. We didn't expect to go up against any armor so we only took 2 Javelin launchers and 12 missiles.

Five bunkers further down, the open bunker held linked 7.62 and linked .50BMG. We didn't find a lot, only 50 cans of .50BMG and 60 cans of 7.62mm. The next open bunker held Mk-211 and M1022 and we filled my pickup. We were starting to run out of room and all we needed now was 5.56 and M118LR. We filled the sleeper with the rifle ammo.

"Ok, that does it, where is the fuel depot?"

"Follow me."

About 20 minutes later, we were at the motor pool and they started to fill the tanker with JP-8. Rob said that would take a while and suggested we check out some of the buildings and see what we could find. We entered several buildings that held offices, classrooms and etc., we found an armory. We took two boxes of magazine rebuild kits for the M-16s, a dozen SOPMOD kits and started looking for rifles. When we found a locked steel door, we used some persuasion and finally got it open. It appeared to have weapons to be evaluated or some such thing.

There was a Barrett payload rifle, complete with a BORS; the one intended to shoot the 25mm grenades and several cases of the various rounds including M1019 air bursting, M1049 armor piercing, M1051 target spotting and M1050 target practice. Fortunately there was also a Barrett soft mount specific to the rifle.

Even better, they had two Tac-50s for evaluation; both complete with the McCann Night Vision Rail Mount with the AN/PVS-27 MUNS, a Nightforce NXS 12-42x56mm Mil Dot scope, Jet Suppressor, 20 spare 5-round magazines and a cleaning kit. Justin and I took both based on our recent shooting experience. We lugged the stuff back to the tanker and my pickup, loading the 25mm ammo in the sleeper and the new rifles in the back of my pickup. Justin and I then stood guard while Rob finished filling the tanker. This time we used gallon jugs of PRI-D, 4 per tank. There were several cases of the Hornady 750gr A-MAX match and we took it all. It was in 200 round cases.

We eased out of the same entrance, hopefully with no one the wiser. After rolling north for a time, Justin called.

"Hey Ted, up for a detour?"

"Going where?"

"Bentonville. We can check the place out and see if it would be worth a trip back to their warehouse."

"Suits me Justin. Maybe we can find an empty tractor trailer rig and load it up."

We weren't the first with the idea and all we found was leftovers. There was a semi tractor-trailer backed up to the loading dock. Someone had tried to hot wire it and we tried too. The battery was dead and it must have been sitting there for a long time. While they went through the warehouse, I drained the fuel, added PRI-D to the tank and put the fuel back in. Then, the dead batteries had to be replaced. By the time I got finished, they had the truck half loaded.

"Finding anything worth taking?"

We've picked up a good assortment of clothes, some OTC medications and bandages and some food that got overlooked. There are quite a few work boots, you may want to pick up a couple of pairs and some spare laces."

"No guns or ammo, huh?"

"Don't know; we can't get into the locked vault. Want to give it a try?"

"We have that C-4, caps and fuse. Anyone have how much idea to use?"

"I don't know, one of those sticks per hinge and roll out one more stick into a rope and put it around the lock?"

"Give me ten minutes."

I took 4 of those 20oz sticks of C-4, 3 caps and a coil of safety fuse. Once it was rigged, I asked, "Everybody ready? Fire in the hole, fire in the hole, fire in the hole," and I lit the fuse. Each fuse was 36" long and if the fuse burned 1' (30cm) per minute I had ample time to clear the area. The massive explosion blew off the hinges and dropped out the combination lock. I think I used too much plastic. We took a couple of minutes to get the insides lined up and pulled the door open.

They had a few cases of ammunition and an assortment of shotguns and hunting rifles. I hauled what I found out to the sleeper in the semi and put the ammo and components in the box trailer. Next, I went looking for work boots and took an assortment of 2 pairs in each size so I had some for everyone.

"Got everything you want?"

"I'd like to get some cigarettes to use for trade goods."

"We got those and all the butane lighters we could find. If you think we might need them, grab some flints and Zippo lighter fluid."

It was just another sign of the times. People who smoked used to carry Zippo lighters and might have the lighter for years, replacing the flints and adding a little lighter fluid

(naphtha). Every few years, they might need to replace the wick if they tended to let the lighter run out of fluid. These days, most of the lighters were made out of plastic and burned butane. They mostly came from China. I had a 50 pack of BIC lighters that didn't say where they were made; they just identified the US headquarters in Connecticut; the company is French. I got them on a rare trip to Costco.

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We didn't count the ammo and other things we picked up at Fort Chaffee; it was easier to just weigh it. We only added M136s when we couldn't find enough M-72s. We did really well on M1022 and Mk211, TOM and Derek must have missed those bunkers. We didn't do as well on M240s and M2HBs, they must have loaded up. Based on the left over belted ammo for both calibers, it appeared that they'd either had space or weight limitations. I suppose it's possible that we went there between their trips to load up on ordnance.

Wal-Mart picked over or not, was a Godsend. The clothes I got for us and the boys would last us for years. After giving each member of the family their choices of firearms from Wal-Mart, the balance were set aside as trade goods, primarily for Rob's former employees. It wasn't quite like the setup in the story by Jerry titled *CME*, but it was close. Rob bought survival preps in large quantities and earned a discount. Since he usually bought by the truckload, any excesses were sold to his employees at cost. I was family after I married Katy and we had a different deal.

After we got back, unloaded, etc., Katy and I started working on an area to erect a greenhouse. A local in Springfield erected greenhouses for Texas Greenhouse Company. This led to one question; did he have any of their American Classic greenhouses in stock? If so, what size were they? And how much would it cost us to get one erected after we cleared an area in the trees so it could get enough light? We clear cut an area 150' long by 60' wide, about one-fifth of an acre.

Then, I got a dozer from Rob and we removed the stumps and leveled the spot. I asked Rob to locate the erector if he could and determine the available sizes and cost. Rob and Justin got together and went one better, they bought his entire inventory. It seems that gold had taken an uptick and the guy quoted them the installations based on gold being double what it was worth when the war happened.

As the American economy recovered in 2009 and 2010, the price of gold and silver didn't fall; it went up because of the loss of confidence in the American dollar. It was close to \$1,800 an ounce for gold and \$36 an ounce for silver. Hence, their gold holdings were nearly priceless. It also made the boys very rich young men with their 400 ounces each of gold worth three-quarters of a million each. I think they would have given all of the gold away just to have their parents back.

The greenhouse erected on our plot was 30' wide by 90' long. It had a poured floor and tables installed for 60' of the 90' length. The remaining floor space was planted with ra-

ther unusual plants, coffee trees and assorted tropical plants. The tropical section was divided from the rest of the greenhouse with a glass partition and a door framed in aluminum. Meanwhile, family members went far and wide to locate the various unusual plants. The species they found were *Coffea arabica* and *Coffea canephora* (Robusta). These particular species were blended to make Folgers, Maxwell House (until 2007) and most of the major coffee brands.

One of the reasons that most major brands of American coffee were interchangeable was the fact that they were just variations on the blend of Arabica and Robusta beans. Kraft changed that when they went to Arabica only. Didn't matter; like the majority of other Americans we drank Folgers. Anyway, the trees would take a minimum of 2 and possibly as many as 4 years before they flowered. Each little cherry would contain 2 beans. We would have to process the beans and then roast them. After, we'd have to try combinations until we were able to duplicate Folgers.

"You do realize that we may be down to tea before we can harvest coffee, don't you?"

"Katy, you can cut down to one pot of coffee a day, if you'd prefer. I'll drink Lipton's or whatever tea we have available."

"I hope you like Earl Grey, that's what we have the most of."

"Will it stay fresh?"

"It's vacuumed packed, so I think it will. We have both tea bags and loose tea. The Lipton is bagged and the Earl Grey is loose."

"How much do we have?"

"Which one?"

"Lipton."

"Twenty-four 100-count boxes of regular bags and twenty-four boxes of the 22-count iced tea bags, not counting one open box of each."

"How is our supply of Folgers?"

"We have 127 cans on the shelf plus the open can. But we also have other brands of coffee like Maxwell House, Hills Brothers, French Market and Yuban Arabica. Some of those brands were what was salvaged after the war. We only ever bought Folgers. I sometimes make a pot of French Market for its unique flavor."

"Must be a developed taste, I don't really like it."

"Have you tried it?"

“Once.”

“Well it was probably made overly strong and you weren’t used to the chicory. I’ll offer you a cup the next time I brew some. I looked at the things you got for the boys and we should be good on clothes and work boots until they’re mostly grown. Since you now have a Tac-50 like Daddy’s, I’m going to try the Barrett again. I just hope we don’t have to put all of this weaponry to use other than for hunting.”

“Hey, watch what you say, TOM says God has a sense of humor and you might end up with something none of us want.”

“He’s that old guy that stopped by looking for information about where the state line was?”

“Yep. You’ve read some of his stories. He’s consistent if nothing else, M1A rifle, Mossberg 590A1 shotgun and a Taurus PT1911. Then when all hell breaks loose, he starts looking for his favorite military toys.”

“What’s he like?”

“LAW rockets, M-61 hand grenades and .50 caliber machineguns. Most of that stuff goes back to the War in Vietnam and some to WWII. I can only guess that he picked up a Barrett at Fort Chaffee.”

“You didn’t run into them?”

“No, but I think they got there first based on what was missing.”

After we got everything going in the new greenhouse, we drove to Springfield so Katy could try the M82A1M (M107). Although it was heavy, she liked the rifle and was shooting 2MOA before we called it a day. Her Dad gave her a laser range finder since the rifle didn’t have the BORS.

“I like it, ok if I keep it?”

“Sure, I still have a Barrett.”

“Oh?”

“I picked up a M109 payload rifle. It shoots 25mm grenades.”

“I thought I heard that they didn’t market the rifle due to the excessive recoil.”

“Someone at Fort Chaffee was apparently doing an evaluation. It has a soft mount.”

“What’s that?”

“It allows you to mount the weapon in a ring mount or pintle mount. Have to rig up a pintle mount and mount it in the back of the Ford. It’s basically a pipe to insert the pintle, a pin, into a rigid post that absorbs much of the recoil from the gun mounted.”

“And that makes the M109 useable?”

“I haven’t tried it but it should.”

“So...what’s the point, are you trying to prove that Einstein was wrong?”

“What do you mean?”

“He once said, *I do not know with what weapons World War III will be fought, but World War IV will be fought with sticks and stones.*”

“Not by Americans, there’s no way anyone could destroy all the firearms floating around this country. But I know that quote; it was something he either said or wrote to ol’ ‘Give ‘em Hell’ Harry. In a way, that’s why we’re so well armed, not everyone is a good guy who will respect others’ property rights. I just hope if someone happens upon us with those kinds of intentions, we can hold them at bay until the Cavalry arrives.”

“Come on Ted, we have more weapons that we can shoot at one time.”

“We do and we’ll start big and work our way down to our small arms. I don’t want anyone, even the boys, moving around without being armed. We’ve already had one unexpected visitor; thank God he was a good guy. It wouldn’t take much to clue a person that we’re up the road just off 65. Last time it was us doing target practice; next time is could be something as simple as wood smoke.”

“Yeah, whatever. Let’s hope it never comes to that.”

The conversation was over and I decided that I needed to touch up the edges on my fighting knife. I had spent many an hour working on the top edge to get it as sharp as the main edge. I can’t tell you why, but it periodically needed a touch up using an Arkansas stone. I had a combo soft/hard stone and a black surgical stone. I used the hard stone first followed by the surgical stone and had it sharp enough to shave with in no time at all.

Why That One – Chapter 12

I'm no Jim Bowie and had never been taught knife fighting. I had read in one of the Patriot Fiction stories that if your opponent is close enough to use a bayonet, they're too close. Understand, the bayonet is at the front end of your rifle and a knife fight is even closer. I had no intention of resorting to my knife unless I was out of ammo, grenades, rockets and any other means of self-defense. Katy and the boys had Explorer boot knives and a smaller Bowie style knife with a 6" blade, stamped 'Made in China'.

After I finished with my Laredo Bowie, I did my Explorer and then started in on their knives. Katy's were much like mine, needing only a touch up. However, the blades on the boys' knives looked like they had been chopping rocks and I had to use all three stones, starting with the soft and moving to the hard and finally the surgical.

"Boys, we need to have a talk about knives. A knife is not a pry bar, a hammer or a shovel. If you need a pry bar, use a pry bar and the same goes for a hammer and a shovel. I got the edges back on them and I'll tell you, it took most of the day and well into the evening. I have a Cold Steel Special Forces shovel for each of you plus a 24" Latin machete. They're made by Cold Steel and patterned after the machete manufactured by the Collins Company. They're not as sharp as your knives, but make no mistake, they are very sharp. If you have to have a hammer or shovel, use the shovel and if you need a pry bar, get one from the garage. Understand?"

They both nodded and I returned their hunting knives and boot knives followed by the machetes and the Spetsnaz style shovels. The blade on the shovels were sharpened too, but not to the degree of the machetes, let alone the knives. Did you know that pre-war, Bowie knives were illegal in many states? It even included Texas, if you can believe that. California had passed a law way back when about double edged knives as part of their Assault Weapons ban. I suppose that's why the Laredo Bowie purchased in Ventura didn't have the top edge sharpened.

With the greenhouse, we would have year round produce and eventually coffee and tropical fruits, like bananas. I think I read in one of those stories that coffee was grown somewhere in the eastern US, maybe the Carolinas. Most US grown coffee comes from Hawai'i. The coffee wouldn't taste like anything we could buy in a grocery store, but it would be coffee. I had to watch how much Earl Grey I drank because that orange flavoring was suspected of causing cancer; I remember reading that on Wiki.

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I had just finished up with the stock and was carrying a pail of milk back to the house to put into quart jars when something slammed me in the left shoulder, knocking me to the ground. On the way down, I dropped the milk pail and heard a distinct sound that sounded a whole lot like a rifle shot. I hit my head on the ground and came close to being knocked out. I had a tremendous pain in my left shoulder and reached up to see

why it hurt. My shoulder screamed in agony when I touched it and I yanked my hand away. I looked at my hand through half opened eyes and saw it covered with blood.

My pant leg was wet and I reached down to see if I'd been shot in the leg too, but it must have been the milk I was carrying and had spilled. At least when my right hand came back, there was less blood than before. I rolled on my right side and tried to get up, without much success. I yelled something and passed out.

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I started to wake up later and my head hurt so bad I was afraid to open my eyes. My left shoulder felt like I'd been run over by a truck. When I managed to finally open my eyes, I discovered that I was in bed and my left shoulder was heavily bandaged. My outer clothing was missing and so was my T-shirt. I reached down, out of habit I suppose, and I still had my boxers on.

"What happened?" I asked aloud. My voice was very strange, like I hadn't wet my whistle in a while. I tried to sit up and found that I didn't have the strength and my attempt made my left shoulder really hurt.

"You're awake!"

"What happened?"

"You were shot in the left shoulder honey."

"Can you help me sit up?"

"The doctor said to keep you flat on your back until he had a chance to check you over."

"What doctor?"

"The doctor that Daddy and Uncle Rob shanghaied and dragged down here to tend to your wound. You were shot from the back and your left shoulder blade was damaged extensively. The exit wound was really large and I thought you were going to bleed to death before they got here. I used some of those blood stopper bandages and pretty much got it stopped by the time they got here. You went into shock and although we have IV sets, I don't know how to start an IV."

"Sorry, I meant..."

"So after I got the blood stoppers in place and they started to work, I radioed Springfield and told them you'd been shot."

"Who shot..."

“Anyway, they finally got here and the doctor said you’d need surgery but you were in too bad of shape to be moved. He established an IV and put you on saline to bulk up your blood. Then he asked every ones’ blood type and used an IV set and empty bags to draw blood from Daddy and Uncle Rob. Once he got the transfusion started, he gave you a shot of something and Daddy and Uncle Rob moved you to the kitchen table. He did the surgery right there on our kitchen table, can you believe that? You know how both Daddy and Uncle Rob have those fancy trauma kits, right? They brought both theirs and between what we had and what they supplied he had almost enough instruments. I had to stop and boil some of the ones he discarded so he had enough.”

“Am I...”

“Don’t interrupt. He had to piece your shoulder blade (scapula) back together the best that he could. You’re missing a lower chunk but he said it wouldn’t be serious problem. You will need physical therapy before you get full use of your left arm.”

“Stop, Katy and answer my questions. Who shot me and am I going to be ok?”

“I don’t know and probably.”

“One at a time. Who shot me?”

“I don’t know.”

“Am I going to be ok?”

“Probably, isn’t that what I just said?”

“Are you going to call your Daddy and have him bring the doctor down here so I can sit up?”

“No.”

“What do you mean no?”

“They’re already on the way down here because he wanted to check you today. On a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being the worst, what’s your pain level?”

“Twenty.”

“I’m going to call that a seven. You can have a Percocet, 5mg.”

“How can I swallow if I can’t sit up?”

“Let me get the pill and a glass of water with a straw. I’ll help you up partway, but not fully upright.”

I think now that it would have hurt less if she'd just helped me sit up all the way upright. Anyway, she brought the pill and a glass of water with a straw. She helped me up after putting the tablet in my mouth and then reached for the glass on the nightstand. I took a large sip and finally got the pill down, but it didn't provide immediate relief. We had Oxycodone generic in several strengths and one size was immediate release. The difference between rapid and delayed release is significant. Rapid release takes an hour to reach maximum blood level while delayed release takes three hours.

"I'm Doctor Brown, how are we doing today?"

We?

"I can't speak for you, but it hurts like a bitc...."

"Have you taken anything for the pain?"

"Percocet, 5mg, about 30 minutes ago."

"In that case, I don't think I'll give you more pain medication. Here, sit up so I can examine the wound."

"I can't. Someone has to help me."

"Justin, could you help him up?"

"Hold out your right arm, Ted."

"Is this going to hurt?"

"I won't feel a thing."

"I was asking about me, not you."

"You tell me," he said as he pulled me up.

On the way upright it took all I could do to keep from screaming. Once upright, it hurt, but not nearly as badly; call that a fifty on the way up and about ten once I got there. I was no more than sitting up when Doctor Brown pulled the tape off; call that a twenty-five. Just because I don't cuss doesn't mean I don't know or haven't heard the words. I was about ready to share my education with them as he poked and prodded. After checking the incision on my back, he had me lay down so he could examine the exit wound. I could see that and let me tell you, it looks like an 80mg Oxycodone moment to me.

“Well, there’s no infection, so we’ll continue the antibiotics and the IV for the moment. If you run out of D5W, switch him to normal saline. Limit his intake to liquids and soft foods only. I’d say he should be able to get out of bed in about a week to ten days.”

“How long should I continue the IV?”

“Continue the IV until the antibiotic is gone. I’ll leave some antibiotic tablets in case they are needed. You’re very lucky Ted. Normally surgery like that is done in a hospital operating room with a full staff in attendance. It was meatball surgery for the most part.”

Meatball surgery

A nickname for surgery that is meant to be performed rapidly to stabilize the patient as quickly as possible.

Amid technical innovations and changes of personnel, one thing that did not change was the MASH's basic function of performing what Capt. H. Richard Hornberger (February 1, 1924 – November 4, 1997) of the 8055th (Korea) later called "meatball surgery."

Speaking as Richard Hooker, pseudonymous author of M*A*S*H, he suggested that meatball surgery is a specialty in itself. "We are not concerned with the ultimate reconstruction of the patient. We are concerned only with getting the kid out of here alive enough for someone else to reconstruct him. Up to a point we are concerned with fingers, hands, arms and legs, but sometimes we deliberately sacrifice a leg in order to save a life, if the other wounds are more important. In fact, now and then we may lose a leg because, if we spent an extra hour trying to save it, another guy in the pre-op ward could die from being operated on too late. Our general attitude around here is that we want to play par surgery. Par is a live patient."

I wasn't sure how reconstructing my scapula squared with the term meatball surgery.

“They left, would you like some beef broth?”

“No. How about 2 grilled cheese sandwiches and some tomato soup?”

“Well, if I run it through the blender, I suppose you could call it soft food. Anything with tomatoes in it may cause reflux and it’s a no-no.”

“How long have I been on an IV?”

Twenty-three days.”

“Make the food, I’ll take a Nexium.”

“I don’t know if that will interact with the antibiotic.”

“Which antibiotic am I on?”

“Ceftobiprole.”

“Never heard of it.”

“It’s supposed to be the latest thing and it’s IV only. I have the drug company handout.”

◦

Ceftobiprole medocaril is an extended-spectrum cephalosporin with activity against methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus* spp., vancomycin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, penicillin-resistant *Streptococcus pneumoniae*, vancomycin-resistant *Enterococcus faecalis*, Enterobacteriaceae, and *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*. Inactivity includes extended-spectrum β -lactamase (ESBL)–producing Enterobacteriaceae and *Enterococcus faecium*. Preliminary data suggest that ceftobiprole may be effective with a 1-hour infusion of 500mg every 12 hours for gram-positive infections and 500mg every 8 hours with a 2-hour infusion for polymicrobial infections.

◦

“What dosage are you using?”

“Five-hundred milligrams every 8 hours with the infusion rate set at 2 hours.”

“Expensive?”

“Five treatments ran one ounce of gold and you’ve been on three treatments a day for 23 days. Daddy bought you 15 ounces of gold worth or enough for 75 treatments. So far you’ve taken 70 treatments and have five left to go.”

“Geez.”

“He said the same thing, but it’s only money. We’ll owe him big time.”

“So...two more days of antibiotics. Why can’t I get up for week to ten days?”

“You can, if you’re able.”

“What happened to my clothes?”

“I used the Paramedic shears and cut them off.”

“Hey, that was a fairly new pair of jeans and the shirt wasn’t that old.”

“Well, the shirts had holes in them and I couldn’t pull the jeans off without hurting you worse than you already were.”

I wasn’t ‘able’ for 2 weeks and once I was up, my left arm was in a sling to keep the weight off my shoulder and allow it to heal. I had been on Advil for the last 8 days lest I get addicted to the pain killers. That had been an experience; just when the 5mg Percocet were doing the job, I got pulled off and the discomfort (pain) started all over again. I suppose I should correct that, I was allowed to go to the bathroom, with help getting there and back to the bed.

Don and Justin (Jr.) took turns staying with us to handle the chores. I asked them to figure out who shot me and where they were when they shot. I had my mind made up that the shooter had been on the bluff. They disagreed, citing the angle the bullet took as it passed through my body. The bullet’s trajectory was slightly upward, indicating a shot from someone at ground level, probably prone. They searched the woods in the only direction they thought the shot could have come from, eventually finding a single .30-06 case. The case was to the right of a spot that had been made in the ground cover.

Whoever it was hadn’t left any tracks that they could find. When I was able, they showed me the location and initially, I couldn’t find any tracks either. Doctor Brown was back and checked me over, pronouncing me ‘fit’ and able to begin physical therapy in about a month. He educated Katy in the various techniques I needed to do to get full use of my arm and shoulder. I couldn’t give up on whoever it was that shot me. The more I thought about it, the angrier I became. We expected to defend the place against people, who were after our possessions, but just to shoot me and take off?

There was no rhyme or reason I could see. Now if the person had intended to steal what we had and lost courage, I could sort of understand. According to Katy, she hadn’t reacted to my shooting immediately and it was Steve who found me. The amount of blood had terrified him and he got her. She had an almost impossible task moving me to the house because I’m bigger than she is and was totally limp because I was unconscious. Coupled with that fact that they couldn’t drag me by the arms and she said I was lucky she didn’t leave me to lie there.

She started me on the exercises before I thought I was ready and I didn’t get any pain pills although the exercises HURT. Eight weeks after I’d been shot, the wounds were completely healed and I was back to about 80%. I was instructed not to lift anything heavy with my left hand for another two months to make certain the shoulder was completely healed. It was sort of like having 1½ hands and made doing chores difficult. However, the boys helped out and we got them done, somehow.

Shooting proved to be a real experience; apparently the muscles in my left shoulder are connected to the muscles in my right shoulder. It didn’t matter what I shot, the recoil aggravated my left shoulder. I didn’t even try the Tac-50 or the Barrett because they were heavy to carry.

Rob had a mount fabricated and mounted in the bed of the Ford, up near the back of the cab. We fired a couple of the spotter rounds to see how the soft mount worked and it was good enough for government work. He said the mount was a near direct copy of the Pedestal Truck Mount, M31C. He showed me a picture in FM 23-65.

I was determined from that moment on to find my shooter and gave back a bullet, either 7.62x51mm, .50BMG or 25mm air bursting round. I spent every free moment looking for signs and eventually found what I took to be tracks leading towards US 65. I lost them after a while and marked a tree near where it happened. I had to help the boys with evening chores and would try again the next day.

When I returned the next day after morning chores, I tried to pick up the trail but couldn't find it. I probably didn't matter; I was only about 75 yards from US 65. I didn't have much choice, I had to give up for now and hope that was the end of it. If they came back, my situational awareness would be much higher and maybe, just maybe, I could even it up or learn why they shot at me. I have been accused of being anal retentive more than once.

It might have been early, but we brought out the boys Loaded M1As and started teaching them in their use. I also had Beretta 92FS pistols and I'd train them on the pistol after they'd mastered the rifle. At least, if the shooter came back, they'd have something that could hurt the guy. I'd have to get some more 124gr Lawman and Gold Dot +P. I intended to equip them with pistol belts, M1025 Military Double Magazine Pouch and M12 Universal System Military Holster along with their Cold Steel shovel and machetes. I had 6 each of the machetes and shovels and thought it might be a good time to dig out both for Katy and me.

I took the time to sharpen them all to a good meat cutting edge using my belt sander type knife sharpener. I did the same with those I gave to the boys and warned them that I sharpened them further and they should exercise great care. I also dug out the ALICE gear for the three of them including the suspenders, pistol belts and medium sized packs. It would be a while before I could carry my large pack and went to a fanny pack.

I carried my 20-round magazines in surplus pouches that held 3 magazines each and had 4 pouches on my pistol belt. I decided to see if we could round up some bandoleers, magazine chargers and stripper clips for the 7.62 rifle ammo. It seemed the more we had, the more I realized what we were missing. OTOH, the grenade pouches were no longer empty. However 12 magazines, 8 grenades, the fanny pack, my bayonet and Bowie plus the Camelbak, holster, P-14 and 70-rounds of .45acp meant I was still loaded down when I went looking for trouble.

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“Mice!”

“What about mice?”

“We have mice and they’re chewing into everything. It’s a good thing most of our food is LTS food that they can’t get into.”

“We didn’t used to have mice.”

“True, we used to have Copperheads and they love mice. They frequently invite them to dinner...as the main course.”

“We still have Copperheads. It’s just that we don’t have as many and they can’t nest in the cave. I’ll get some traps and we’ll bait them with peanut butter and chocolate, mice love both.”

“We’ve always had a mouse or two, Ted. It’s just lately, since the war that they’ve become a problem.”

“Let’s drive up to Springfield and get some traps.”

“It might be a good time to have Doctor Brown check you over and see if you’re able to resume your previous activities.”

“Crap, I’ve been milking this and got the boys doing all the chores and shooting the M1As and Berettas.”

“We should get an assortment of shot for their 590s. All we have is slugs, two sizes of buckshot and those worthless flechettes.”

“Hey, they have their place; they’re great in heavy vegetation and punch right through.”

“So, when was the last time we fired any?”

“We haven’t since just after I got them. That doesn’t mean we won’t. Would you rather have them and...”

“Yeah, yeah yeah, you often say that. I doubt we’ll ever have much use for the .50 caliber rifles or that 25mm grenade rifle either.”

“All the same...”

“Boys, get your M1As and pistols, we’re going to Springfield.”

Katy drove and I rode shotgun. The boys were in the back with their M1As sitting butt on the floor and barrel leaning back on their right shoulders. The Loaded M1As have been a last minute acquisition, after the war, because they were available and inexpensive (salvage).

o

Katy took us to her Mom and Dad's. We were no more out of the Ford when Justin called me aside.

"I'm glad you showed up. Rob and I were planning a trip down tomorrow."

"What's up?"

"The entire family is moving from Springfield to Rob's place on Table Rock Lake."

"I didn't realize he had a place at the lake. So, why, pray tell, is everyone moving?"

"Springfield is becoming a very dangerous place. There is a shelter at the lake larger than the shelter here in town and it's fully stocked with LTS food and too many things to list. We'd like Katy, you and boys to move there with us."

"What about housing?"

"There are prefabricated log cabins; enough for one for each family not counting the Lodge."

"Ok, what about power and things like that?"

"Two sources of power, a pair of wind turbines and large industrial sized generators, Cummins DSHAD with 209kw of prime power. There are four generators setup up by Cummins. The first and second generators are set up so the second kicks in if the demand exceeds the prime power rating. The third is used if one of the first two is down and the fourth is a spare. The wind turbines are rated at 250kw. The basement of the lodge has submarine batteries and the inverters. Rob has a large fortune tied up in the his place on the lake,"

"I didn't realize you folks were that well off."

"Oh, we're better off than Rob's place suggests. There is a large barn for livestock, silos filled with feed, more diesel and gasoline than you can imagine. Katy knows about the place, but doesn't know about the proposed move, yet. The compound has excellent security including a 9' high chain link fence topped with razor wire and an alarm system in case someone tries to cut through the fence. There are CCTV cameras covering the entire perimeter and a double gate arrangement so a vehicle can be let in through the outer gate and searched before the inner gate is opened."

"Like some prisons have?"

Why That One – Chapter 12

“Exactly like some prisons have. Plus, there are a total of 8 guard towers although typically only the gate towers are manned.”

“What about our things down at our place?”

“A local moving company will pick up your things and move you lock, stock and barrel.”

“Gee Justin; I just don’t know we have a lot invested in our place. When do you have to have an answer?”

“Within 48 hours.”

“What about fuel for the generators?”

“One 40,000 gallon tank for each generator, filled with stabilized fuel. We also have the tankers we’ve picked up since the war so fuel won’t be a problem for a long time. We also have a 20,000 gallon tank of stabilized gas, a 5,000 gallon tank of kerosene and three 30,000 gallon propane tanks. Katy and you would get a 3 bedroom cabin with a full basement.”

“I wonder how Katy will react.”

“I know how she will react Ted. Her only question will be, ‘why did you wait so long?’”

“What will we do for food?”

“Besides what we already have? There’s commercial greenhouse and a 5 acre garden.”

“At least we can go fishing. What about furnishings?”

“Your cabin is unfurnished, but as I said, a mover will move your household goods. We’ll arrange for any hay or feed you have to be moved and stored there in the hay loft and granary.”

“Will they move everything except for the feed?”

“You’ll be responsible for moving your firearms, ammunition and communications gear. Rob has talked with a local radio guy and he’s agreed to move the towers and antennas. We’ll help with the PV panels and wind turbine. We’ll also take care of moving your livestock since you don’t have a horse trailer.”

“One last question.”

“Yes?”

“Exactly why did you wait so long?”

“You saw the MNG troops when you came into town?”

“Actually, no. Hey, that’s strange, they’re usually under foot.”

“They’re gone.”

“Gone where?”

“They didn’t say. They just up and pulled out in the middle of the night without so much as a by your leave.”

“What’s in those guard towers?”

“Don and Justin went up to the Fort to pick up more M240s and/or M2HBs. We have a M31C mounted in each tower now. In fact, when we got to fabricating them, we ended up making a dozen and gave you one, put one in each of the towers and kept two in reserve.”

“We’ll mount a Ma Deuce and the Mk-19 on either side of the gates. The M240s and other Ma Deuces will go in one to each of the towers along with an assortment of rockets, grenades and so forth.”

“I’m afraid that I don’t understand why the sudden move out of Springfield and I’m not so sure I want to abandon all we’ve built down by Ridgedale. We have a lot of time invested in the location.”

“Well, there aren’t as many Copperheads down by the lake.”

“We’ll start packing. When did you say the movers would be down to pick up our things?”

“Sometime later this week. And, yes I’m sure Katy will go for it. It will be better for Steve and Roy, too, being with more of the family. I see you’ve moved them to Main Battle Rifles, but why the Berettas?”

“I’m not sure they can handle the recoil from a .45. Want them on the 9mm until later. Which reminds me, I need some 9mm 124gr +P Gold Dot and Lawman Training ammo.”

“Don’t you think you’re pushing a little considering their ages?”

“They’re just as vulnerable as any of us. If they’d had better weapons, they might have been able to deal with the guy who shot me.”

“Assuming it was a guy and not a kid or even a woman.”

“You two done visiting?”

“Yeah, I guess we’re moving to Table Rock Lake.”

“Good. I knew you’d see the wisdom in moving.”

“Not really, but your dad talked me into it.”

“How?”

“The lack of Copperheads.”

“Oh, there’re still Copperheads there, but fewer and farther between.”

“We’d better get going so we can start packing.”

“I’m curious Justin, how can Rob and you afford this?”

“Rob has been highly successful in his construction business and he used his employees when they didn’t have anything to do. I had a very successful lawsuit when I was first starting out and several more since. We’ll never make the Fortune 500 of the wealthiest people in the country, but a lot of that income was converted into precious metals early on. We’ve been accumulating gold and silver for about 25 years, long before the survivalist/prepper movement.”

“When should we expect those movers?”

“I’m not totally sure, sometime early next week. We start moving other things come Monday.”

“Ok, thanks. Ready to go?”

“Whenever you are.”

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Steve helped me with the contents of the shelter while Roy helped Katy upstairs. It took most of the weekend, but we were ready on Monday morning. A pickup pulling a 6 stall horse trailer, a flatbed to haul hay and straw plus a grain truck arrived just before 9 Monday morning. They loaded everything they came after and took off. By now, the shelter was empty with the contents on the front porch and piled high in the living room. That only left the freezer to be moved from the shelter, along with the generator. I said that generator was going to be a problem if we ever need to move it. While it could just make the turn to go up the stairs it weighed $\frac{3}{4}$ of a ton.

Tuesday morning, a truck showed up to move the generator. It had a tilt bed and a winch. They laid down plywood on the stairs and winched it up right onto the bed of the truck. Next, they began loading the contents from the shelter, except for us keeping the firearms. I held back the current load of ammo plus one reload.

Wednesday morning, a 40' moving van showed up and they loaded the remainder of our goods. Shortly after they left the radio guy and his assistants showed up and started dismantling antennas, the tower and PV panels. They returned the following day to dismantle and move the wind turbine, batteries and the other electrical equipment. We followed the previous day's movers to the place on the lake. It took the rest of the day to get the house arranged the way Katy wanted it. The freezer went into the basement, and wasn't easy because it had never been unloaded.

It was late the following day before we had everything settled. The guys with our wind turbine and other things arrived late in the day and everything went up to the wind farm, except for the PV panels, batteries, charge controllers and inverters. Most of the ammo and ordnance went into a bunker and we only kept out the stuff we earlier held back.

The compound at the lake was just as described, high fences, guard towers, razor wire above a 9' chain link fence. The cabins were the pre-fabricated log cabins and had been in for quite a while. The fence and guard towers looked relatively new. Between the machine guns we'd taken previously and the ones picked up on this trip to the Fort, every guard tower was equipped. Rob's boat was a 1994 26' MacGregor sailboat with a diesel inboard engine. There were 2 runabouts plus a 52' Munson Packboat and a Nautica 41' RHIB with an inboard diesel motor. Obviously, Rob was a Jerry D Young fan and had read *Keys to the Kingdom*.

The bunker was also a new addition to the compound since it was seeded and the grass barely peeking through. I began to wonder, all this simply because the MNG had pulled out of Springfield? Surely, there was a lot more to the story. For now, my questions would go unanswered because of the amount of work that needed to be done and my somewhat limited physical abilities. It took 3 weeks of very hard work for the families and some of Rob's former employees to complete the move and move-in.

These particular employees, it turned out, all had two things in common: they were former employees; and, they were former military. It was an eclectic group of soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines. Each had been an NCO during their military service and was a cut above the average in their respective branches. Rob had hired me back when because of my knowledge of building earthquake resistant buildings. These men had apparently been hired, at least in part, because of their military backgrounds.

Visiting with Katy, I learned more about the compound. Rob bought it after he read the story *If You Don't Like the Weather* and the idea for the cabins came from *Scavenger*. The shelter was under the Lodge and had 10,000ft² with equipment to support 100 persons nearly indefinitely. The compound was owned by the construction corporation and

classified as a corporate retreat. She hadn't known about the recent changes until that day we went to Springfield and Justin talked to me while Jeanie explained it all to her.

She went on to say that the MacGregor was purchased used, but the other boats were all new. The runabouts had big Mercury engines and burned a lot of gas. That was only one of the reasons Rob had large stores of gasoline, diesel and propane. I told her that Justin told me about the fuel and that with the tankers we had, we should be good for a very long time. She countered with, "Not counting the biodiesel and alcohol. He has a triple still and a large biodiesel processor. There are silos of rapeseed stored that can be pressed for the oil and the pulp converted to livestock feed. Same with the alcohol; the pulp will feed livestock and the ethanol will either run converted vehicles or blended to E-85."

The Lodge wasn't like the one in the 'Weather' story. It had a 6 bay communal laundry in the basement with washers and dryers. It sat above the shelter and the 12" thick floor was the roof to the shelter. It had been poured using Ducrete (concrete with depleted uranium as the aggregate) and had several times the resistance to radiation as regular concrete. Rob said that the having thickness of regular concrete was about 2.4" while the having thickness of Ducrete was 0.08". Their backyard shelter had a foot of regular concrete topped with 10' of earth.

The size of the total compound, both inside and beyond the fence was huge, 40 acres. The fenced in portion was between 10 and 15 acres, but closer to the former. In addition to the guard towers, the fence had passive infrared sensors to prevent someone from cutting through the fence at oh dark thirty. The 'clinic' was staffed by Doctor Brown and his wife, a surgical nurse. It was a 4 bed setup for long term care and two 'emergency room' stations.

The dock on the lake had the biggest boathouse I believe I'd ever seen. It held all of the vessels I mentioned and had room for two more large vessels like the Munson or MacGregor. Everything was afloat on barrels or pontoons including the dual gasoline/diesel pump. Those were supplied by hoses, not pipes.

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"I called this meeting to see how everyone is doing on getting settled in and discuss the features of the compound. First, is there anyone who isn't completely moved in? No? Ok, about the compound. We've made some changes over that past few weeks in case it became necessary to abandon Springfield and relocate here. Those include the fence, guard towers and other security measures. The only one among you who wasn't familiar with the layout here is Ted. Unless Katy told him about the compound, I doubt he knew about it.

"Most of those silos contain rapeseed which we can extract canola oil from. While most of it will be converted to biodiesel, it can also supply all of our vegetable oil needs. Two are filled with corn for ethanol and two are filled with livestock feed. I've been at this

preparedness business since the late eighties and because the construction business has been good to me, have accumulated a great deal. I've always envisioned this compound as our bug out location and made the preparation in town in case we didn't have time to bug out.

"There's more to the story about the Missouri National Guard leaving than is apparent. They were federalized and ordered to Texas. Apparently, our southern neighbors have decided to reclaim Aztlán. The name Aztlán was first taken up by a group of Chicano independence activists led by Oscar Zeta Acosta during the Chicano movement of the 1960s and 1970s. They used the name "Aztlán" to refer to the lands of Northern Mexico that were annexed by the United States as a result of the Mexican-American War. Combined with the claim of some historical linguists and anthropologists that the original homeland of the Aztecan peoples was located in the southwestern United States, Aztlán in this sense became a symbol for mestizo activists who believe they have a legal and primordial right to the land. In order to exercise this right, some members of the Chicano movement propose that a new nation be created, The Republic of Aztlán.

"Quiet down, there's more. Not only has Mexico invaded the southwest, the recent war has led to increased geological activity. The Alaskan volcanoes along with most of those along the 'Ring of Fire' have seen increased activity. More recently, that has included the Cascade Range due to slips on the Cascadia subduction zone. My sources say that no one targeted geological formations during the war as some have suggested might happen. Nonetheless, several of us believe we're in for more from nature than we suffered during the war. I have, in essence, circled the wagons.

"That pretty much summarizes what I know at the moment. Once we're totally settled in, we'll resume salvage operations. The majority of what we find will be distributed to those in Springfield although we'll get first choice of what we recover. What we'll need in the future days can't be bought by money for the most part. Justin and I will pay nominal wages in the form of food, fuel, gold and silver for services rendered. Questions?"

That tore it, the room erupted. Katy took me by the arm and the four of us returned to our cabin. I like the others had about a million questions.

"I don't understand something."

"I was looking to you to answer the million questions I have. What is it that you don't understand Katy?"

"I don't understand why Uncle Rob didn't cover everything."

"There's more?"

"Well, he didn't mention the weather."

"What about the weather?"

“It’s going to change.”

“More than it already has? We had a touch of nuclear winter and the rain patterns have been very, what, unseasonable?”

“They have been that. No what I’m talking about is his not mentioning the Gulf Stream and the Hurricanes.”

“What about hurricanes and the Gulf Stream?”

“Uncle Rob has a contact in Florida who survived the war and has kept him up to date on the weather. He’s a meteorologist. Right after the war, there was a series of Hurricanes that went Category five. Then, apparently due to the same global warming, the Gulf Stream began to sink. It began to cool and the Hurricanes stopped but the Gulf Stream hasn’t changed; it’s still sinking.”

“Have you checked for a rock?”

“What rock?”

“TOMs buddy Clarence was always waiting for a rock to come from behind the sun. Wait, we already had that, forget I said anything.”

“That doesn’t mean it couldn’t happen again Ted. Then, there’s Yellowstone.”

“Let me guess, it’s rumbling.”

“Not so far, but with the volcanoes, it’s possible for either the San Andreas Fault or either of the two calderas erupting.”

“You forgot one. You didn’t mention the New Madrid Fault Zone.”

“You knew about that one so I didn’t bring it up.”

“It would be our luck to have some of those movie disasters come true.”

“Like what?”

“A volcano in Los Angeles or an earthquake under New York.”

“Bite your tongue. About the only thing that hasn’t been brought up is a tornado.”

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“Katy and I were discussing the things you forgot to mention.”

“The hurricanes and the Gulf Stream?”

“Among others.”

“She knew about it and I assumed she told you about it. Most of the family knows about both of those.”

“She was surprised you didn’t mention them.”

“I’ve got a lot on my plate at the moment. I’m sure the word will get around. Anything else, I’ve got places to be and people to see.”

“I guess not.”

Katy had also commented that everyone would be included in the guard rotation, eventually. The livestock were being tended by two of the men and we had, at the moment, essentially nothing to do. When I got back to the cabin, I suggested that we do a little shooting practice. Katy begged off, citing the need to do a few loads of laundry. I got a box of slugs, one of buckshot, some of the surplus rifle ammo and the pistol ammo. I got Steve and Roy and told them to get their grown-up weapons so we could get in some range time.

The 1,000 meter range was located outside the wire. The boys took off with me in trail. We set up a shotgun target at 50 meters, rifle targets at 100 and 200 meters plus pistol targets at 7 meters and 25 meters. I had a spotting scope and called their shots. We started with the shotguns and sighted the slugs in at 50 meters followed by a few rounds of buckshot to check how it patterned.

We moved from the shotgun targets to the pistol targets. They were firing the 124gr FMJ ammo in the Berettas and started at the 7 meter target and moved to the 25 meter target. I began to suspect that this wasn’t the first time the boys had fired the shotgun and pistols. Steve was only marginally better than Roy.

Finally, we moved to the 100 meter rifle targets and sighted in the rifles. The rifles only required a single click to allow for the wind and they were shooting groups equal to the surplus ammo they were using. At 200 meters their group opened up a little which I attributed to the ammo more than their shooting. When they finished, we applied target pasters and I took a turn. My primary reason was to confirm that my weapons hadn’t been bumped and the setting changed. They hadn’t and I fired only a few shots.

We pulled the targets and returned to the cabin where we began cleaning the weapons. We had no more than finished up when Katy came back with the clean laundry. The boys got engrossed in a DVD and I helped her put the laundry away and peeled potatoes and carrots and chopped them along with the onion and celery for beef stew. After

the beef chunks were well browned, she added water and set the meat to simmering. She grabbed 2 packages of Wal-Mart stew seasoning.

Two hours later the timer went off and she added the seasoning packets and the vegetables. She reset the timer for 45 minutes and added the lid to the pot. Certain meals like stew or chili are usually one dish meals needing only corn bread or white bread to round out the meal.

“How did they do at the range?”

“Pretty good considering it was their first time.”

“It wasn’t their first time; my brother Robert allowed them to shoot their guns.”

“I wondered. They did much better than I expected and seemed to already know how to clean the firearms.”

“Did they shoot the M9s or their GI .45s?”

“I started them on the M9s because of the recoil. Have they fired the .45s before?”

“Not that I know of. Robert was concerned that the recoil of a .45 might be too much for them. He had a Mark II they fired.”

“What about their parents’ firearms?”

“Do you want to move them up from theirs to the fancy ones?”

By fancy she meant the two Super Match M1As fitted with Nightforce NXS 8-32x56mm Mil Dot scopes and AN/PSV-22 UNS that Robert had for himself and his wife. The shotguns were the same as the boys’, Mossberg 590A1s and the pistols were Para Ordinance P-14s. Since I had them shooting the Berettas, I wanted to hold off on giving them the P-14s. I also wanted to wait until I was satisfied with their ability to shoot the Loaded M1A models well before I moved them to the better rifles with the scopes. He also had the ACOG for both rifles.

Robert obviously had good taste in rifles, his choice of rifle and optics left little to be desired. Why he selected Springfield Armory Mil Spec .45s was probably due to the single stack magazines to better fit their smaller hands. That Black Hills ammo that Katy preferred had one shortcoming, the thinner brass. The quality of their cartridges made them some of the best and they were the perfect weight for a rifle with a 1:10 twist rate.

“Would you like to move up from your National Match to an M21 if I could find one?”

“What would I gain if I did?”

“The ability to use 175gr cartridges, a heavier barrel and better lug system.”

“If you find one, get it and I’ll try it out. But get a good scope like the Nightforce on the Super Match.”

I think I’ve mentioned that the M21 is a Super Match with a different stock. In that regard, Katy wouldn’t have to get accustomed to a different type stock. Where I was going to find a NIB M21 was an entirely different question. Plus, Katy and I would be expected to sign up for the guard rotation and that meant we’d have to sit through an 8 hour class that Rob’s Chief of Security taught.

Bob Jacobs, the Security Chief, was a retired Marine with 24 years in before he was forced to retire due to type II diabetes. I found it hard to believe, looking at the guy, that he had developed diabetes because he was only 42 and in outstanding physical condition. It sometimes runs in families and maybe he had inherited a defective gene. At least he wasn’t on insulin and was able to control his condition with medication, which we had a large supply of.

The clinic Rob had set up for Doctor Brown had been well supplied even before the war and our salvaging had only served to add to Doc’s supply of prescription and OTC medicines. The clinic wasn’t any more elaborate than most of the cabins although it did have a portable X-Ray, a dialysis machine and a full supply of medical equipment. He and his wife were offering advance training for anyone that had EMT-B or combat lifesaver training. Later, they would offer training for those of us who lacked the qualifications for the current class.

Non-denominational church services were offered in the Lodge on Sundays between 11 and 12 and most attended. After, Sunday dinner was served in the dining room. I liked it because it allowed me to become better acquainted with family members I only knew in passing and the few employees I hadn’t worked with at the construction firm. We attended the guard class during our second week and signed up for the guard rotation.

Each Tower was equipped with a pedestal mounted machine gun in either 7.62, .50BMG or had the Mk-19. Additionally, each had 10 rockets, either M-72 or M136s except for the two Towers at the entrance which also had Javelins. The enclosed Towers had windows that could be closed to retain heat in the winter and cooling in the summer. The windows were rigged to drop out of the way in case of an attack. Everything had been done first class.

So who should drop in for a visit? A couple of fellas from Palmdale who were looking for TOM; one said his name was Arly and the other said he was Jeff Storm. Arly sure looked familiar. They said they were actually looking for Ron Brown and didn’t know where he moved.

Why That One – Chapter 13

“You fellas are in luck. Not only do I know where TOM went, he happened to say that they sheltered with Ron and Linda. So, what’s it to be?”

“Why not both? If TOM is close by, we’ll look him up and then go find Ron.”

“Need to know where Clarence may have moved?”

“Who?”

I concluded they didn’t know who the 3 Amigos were and told them Ron was in Prescott Valley, Arizona and Gary went to Flippin, Arkansas to be with his son. They said, “Thank you,” and took off. After they left, I realized he said R. Lee, not Arly. People don’t always look like they do in the movies and on TV. He was the only retired Marine to ever be promoted after he retired. On May 17, 2002, he received an honorary promotion to Gunnery Sergeant from the Commandant of the Marine Corps General James L. Jones in recognition of his role as Gunnery Sergeant Hartmann in Full Metal Jacket, becoming the first retired military member in the history of the USMC to be promoted. I’d have known if he’d said Mail Call or Lock and Load. TOM has been known to say Lock and Load, long before the TV series on History Channel.

For two cents, I’d saddle up and find two M21s, one for me and one for Katy. After I did that, I’d take TOM my Super Match. MacMillan makes a fiberglass stock for the M21, did you know that? You just order the M1A stock with one of two optional cheek pieces. I could just imagine a story starring TOM, Jeff Storm, R. Lee and someone else to make a foursome:

“Weapons check. Jeff, you go first.”

“Ruger Mini-14 with heavy after-market barrel and Butler Creek folding stock. Five Beta-C 100 round magazines, 10 30 round and 30 20 round Ruger magazines. All magazines loaded with M193 or M855A1 and 2,000 rounds of spare M855.

“PTR-91K with 30 20 round magazines and 3 Beta-C 100 round magazines. All magazines loaded with 168gr Black Hills Match Boat Tail Hollow Point plus 500 rounds of 168gr A-MAX and 1,500 rounds of the Match ball.

“Remington 11-87P 20” with Wilson Ghost Ring sights, 3 round magazine extension with 15-round sling, 6 round side saddle and 5 round elastic buttstock shell holder. Two hundred-fifty rounds of Brenneke slugs, five hundred rounds of 12-pellet Remington 00 buckshot, two hundred-fifty rounds of #4 buckshot and two hundred rounds of flechettes.

“Para-Ordinance P-14 with 5 magazines loaded with 230gr Gold Dot. Remainder of a case of 1,000 rounds of the Gold Dot. Backup gun is a Walther PPK in .380 with five magazines and the remainder of 500 rounds of .380 Gold Dot. I guess that’s it.”

“Sounds like you’re set, Jeff. R Lee, what do you have?”

“MacMillan Tac-50 with 10 5 round magazines loaded, half with Mk 211 and half with M1022. A total of 1,200 rounds each of both cartridges. Optics include Nightforce NXS 12-42x56mm Mil Dot scope and McCann night vision rail with the MUNS. Suppressor is the standard Elite Iron Suppressor. Back up weapon is MP-5/10 with 12 magazines and a total of 1,500 rounds of Norma 170gr JHP.

“Handgun is Glock G20C with 5 magazines. No shotgun; that’s it.”

“Gary?”

“Springfield Armory M21 with glass-bedded MacMillan fiberglass stock with ladder style cheek piece. Thirty 20 round CMI magazines. A total of 1,800 rounds of M118LR, 175gr cartridges and ~2,900 rounds of South African. My son has my Loaded with 20 T-57 magazines and half of the South African

“Mossberg 590A1 with 15 round sling, 5 round sidesaddle and 5 round elastic buttstock shell holder. Same ammo load out for the shotgun as Jeff has.

“Handgun is Kimber Custom Tactical II in .45acp with 5 magazines and the same ammo load out as Jeff has. Backup handgun is Sauer and Sohn .32acp with 5 8 round magazines and a total of 200 rounds of 71gr round nose FMJ. I have all of my knives too. My son has my Taurus PT-1911.

“Ok, good. I have the following: Springfield Armory Super Match with 30 CMI 20 round magazines and 2,000 rounds of M118LR 175gr cartridges.

“Shotgun is Benelli M4 Super 90. One case each of 3” Brenneke Black Magic slugs, 15-pellet 00 buckshot and 41-pellet #4 buckshot.

“Handgun is Glock 21 and backup handgun is Glock G30. I have 10 13 round magazines and 5 10 round magazines. Ammo is 230gr Gold Dot, 1,000 rounds.

“My knife is a Glock FM78. Gary, which knives did you bring?”

“Andy, I brought my Cold Steel Laredo Bowie, a 24” Latin Machete and a Special Forces shovel.”

“Jeff?”

“Randall 13” Raymond Thorp Bowie plus a Randall 8” Model 2 Fighting Stiletto.”

“R Lee?”

“Ontario OKC3S Marine Bayonet with Scabbard. Ontario CT5 – Machete. Case 2-blade large pocket knife.”

“Obviously everyone has their favorites. We’re not so good on interchangeability, but with as many magazines and as much ammo as we have, we should be good. Is everything loaded in the Alpha and trailer?”

“Yeah, but why didn’t we get an M-1114 with a .50 mounted?”

“We tried, but none were available. The Alpha is painted in the military paint scheme and has all the appropriate numbering so we should pass a casual inspection. The fuel trailer is a military trailer as is the trailer holding our goods. We’re a sight to behold, two wearing ACUs, one wearing ABUs and one wearing MARPAT. R Lee, what’s with the Gunny insignia? You never made it past Staff Sergeant.”

“Honorary Gunnery Sergeant since May 2, 2002!”

“Everyone got their Nom de Guerre’s down?”

“I’m Gunnery Sergeant Hartmann. Gary’s Senior Airman Bear. Jeff’s going to use Hurricane. What about you, Andy?”

“Sergeant Major Amos.”

“Are we going to have any trouble going through Needles?”

“No problems until we hit Flagstaff. However, we’ve got to stop at Camp Navajo. We need to get in those igloos they have and round out our ordnance.”

“What do we need?”

“I’d like to have some explosives including C-4 and grenades of various types. If we can find Claymores, fine; if not, we’ll have to do without. Since we don’t have anything to mount a M203 on, we’ll try to find H&K M320s. Either will work and we can load up on 40mm grenades. We’ll probably have to settle for M136 AT-4s since the Army doesn’t use many LAWs rockets. Sure be nice to find an igloo full of FIM-92 Stingers.”

“What good is that going to do?” R Lee asked. “They have an IFF feature to prevent friendly fire incidents.”

“That’s why we have to get the later models with the reprogrammable processors. I have a disc that we can insert and reprogram them to eliminate the IFF.”

“Are you sure you want to shoot down our people?” Gary asked.

“By our people, I presume you mean Americans, right?”

“Right.”

“Only if we have to. You do understand that this is an insurrection against the powers that be, don’t you?”

“Tell me one more time why the over-the-hill gang is taking on the US government.”

“Not the whole government; just the Legislative and Executive branches; because they effectively repealed the Bill of Rights. Congress passed the laws and the President signed them. With the new laws, the Bill of Rights is without effect.”

“What dummy thought we could pull this off?”

“You did Gary.”

“Oh, I forgot. Strange crew, a gun store owner, a TV and movie star, a writer and a salesman.”

“Are you going to write this up as another of your stories?”

“I might, if I can remember everything. I guess I’d better keep a journal and when we’re done, you three can remind me what the entries were about.”

“It would be our dumb luck that we complete the mission, you write it all down and the three of us don’t survive to remind you what it all means.”

“Are we ready to go?”

“Wait! I think I’d better get my Loaded M1A model, just in case.”

“He’ll be five minutes. Has everyone test fired the Beta-C mags?”

“I have and haven’t had a problem with the 5.56. I have one of those adapter kits so I can change from one type of rifle to any of the others. For example, if we find any Steyr AUG A3s, I switch to one of those. That’s the thing I like about the magazine, change the tower and it will work with any compatible weapon.”

“R Lee?”

“What? They don’t make a 100 round magazine for the Tac-50. All I have are standard magazines. I sure hope Gary can stay up with us, with his mobility problems we could have a problem.”

“If anyone needs their knives touched up, talk to him; he has a set of Arkansas stones and talked Cold Steel into sharpening the false edge of his Bowie. He’s got a belt sharpener somewhere and worked on the machete and entrenching tool. You can almost shave with them.”

“Almost?”

“Yeah, they’re as sharp as a freshly sharpened butcher’s knife.”

“What’s that pack he has?”

“It’s a Kifaru EMR with the optional gun rest.”

“It’s bigger than he is; how much does it hold?”

“About 7,500in³. I doubt he has it loaded heavy with his mobility problems. He also has a Kifaru Marauder with a more reasonable 2,500in³ capacity. I’m not sure he can even tote that. I wonder if he’s also getting his South African surplus and the T-57 magazines.”

Just then, the garage door opened and Gary asked, “Can someone give me a hand?”

“Are you taking the surplus?”

“It shoots good in my Loaded.”

“What’s that?”

“My Tac-Force vest. It holds 8 magazines and I can put 3 in each of the grenade compartments. That’s my spare knife taped to the left strap. Gave one just like it to Ron Brown.”

“I haven’t seen him in a while; where did he go?”

“Jeff, Linda’s dad died and he’d changed his will. She and her sister each inherited half of the estate. Ron and Linda moved to Prescott Valley, Arizona. They paid off their house in Palmdale and Kevin and John live in it. Brenda moved to Prescott Valley and they also bought her a home.”

“Big estate?”

“Yeah. At least until they paid the taxes. Still had 7 figures each, but he never said how much.”

“How come you bought the Kifaru packs? Aren’t they expensive?”

“Yeah. Plus I had to wait 8 weeks for them to be delivered. The big one is loaded with light bulky items and the smaller is loaded to about the same weight. It’s about all I can do to move with either of them.”

“Big canteens.”

“R Lee, those are Oasis 4-quart canteens. I have two, both the same style.”

“How do you intend to get around with 18 pounds of water, a half-way heavy pack and all that other gear you have?”

“I don’t. I have a 100oz. Camelbak that my son gave me when they were issued new Camelbaks. I’ll limit what I carry to the minimum. I can get around, it just takes me forever. Nobody will suspect a bunch of older men; especially since one’s a cripple.”

“Those ammo cans are heavy. How many rounds in them?”

“Twelve hundred-sixty. They go close to 80 pounds and that’s why I needed help. Jeff, how did you manage to get the suppressors for the rifles?”

“Don’t ask. I know a class III dealer and I borrowed them from him for evaluation.”

“Up in Lancaster?”

“I’d rather not say.”

“Definitely Lancaster.”

[I just hope I came close to copying his writing style.]

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“Are you ready?”

“For what?”

“To go find two M21 rifles with MacMillan fiberglass stocks with the optional cheek piece.”

“All the Springfield Armory M21s have walnut stocks.”

“I know; however, MacMillan makes a M1A stock with an optional cheek piece and they also sell a bedding kit.”

“The barrels should be free floating for the best results.”

“The receiver shouldn’t.”

“Have you ever bedded a rifle?”

“I was in construction, not gunsmithing. I know what I want, full contact bedding of the action with the barrel floated.”

“Where do they make MacMillan stocks?”

“Phoenix.”

“I’m not going to Phoenix; I’m sure that it was nuked. Do you have somewhere closer in mind?”

“Gallery of Guns is in Prescott.”

“Arizona?”

“Yep.”

“Forget it. Besides, they don’t usually have what a person wants anyway. Wouldn’t it be easier to go to Illinois?”

“Geneseo?”

“Yes, it can’t be that far away. Besides, you might actually find that MacMillan stock you were talking about.”

“They don’t offer that stock.”

“That doesn’t mean they don’t have any for evaluation.”

Needless to say, we went to Geneseo, Illinois. We even found the factory and it was locked up tighter than a bank vault. However, there is this company that is somehow affiliated with Springfield Armory and I’m not talking about Reese Surplus. The latter has BM-59s among other things. We got two of the MacMillan stocks, with the cheek piece and even the rails. But, we couldn’t get any rifles. On the way back, we started checking gun stores, provided we could get into the community unnoticed. We found what we were looking for in Des Moines, Iowa.

When we arrived back at Table Rock Lake, Justin Jr. bedded the actions starting with Katy’s. With the heavier barrel, free floated, and the outstanding bedding job, the rifles were shooting under 0.5MOA. We had enough ammo and ordnance to fight WW IV. Up to this point in time, the only ‘disaster’ had been the GTW. No one had even been bitten by a Copperhead, yet.

Rob and Katy's dad had been around the circumference of Table Rock Lake, which took several days. The shoreline measures about 745 miles unless you were talking flood pool, which was 857 miles. They found the occasional group settled into their summer cottages and frequently in the company of several friends. In every case the folks were well armed but most were friendly. They didn't find Brian or Jake although they looked. It wasn't likely they were there because nobody had activated their HAARP arrays.

Unfortunately, they did find more than one cabin that had the appearance of having been attacked, much like in Quebec Hotel Romeo (*QHR*). It was related to what we were experiencing because several of the patriot fiction authors had reported something similar. For example, back in early November, 2009, TOMs story *The Apprentice* sort of came true. If you recall, in the story Jennifer developed a cure for malaria. An actual vaccine was reported by AP around November, 2009 that was expected to eliminate 50% of the 1 million malaria cases that happened in Africa every year. Unfortunately, it never got beyond the trial stage due to the war.

I still couldn't understand why we gathered at the lake. Security in numbers? Maybe, but how much protection would a large group provide if we had a natural, as opposed to manmade, disaster? I'm not certain that a security force could offer much protection against volcanic ash or a tornado. Nonetheless, a moderate level of security was constantly maintained. I about half figured that, should I bring it up, I'd end up hearing, "Would you rather have it and not need it or need it and not have it?"

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After a year of maintaining a full guard schedule and not needing it, we cut back to a lighter schedule with only some of the Towers staffed. That became the norm for the second year. The third year, only one post by the entrance was staffed. We were never attacked by another person. A couple of people received snakebites... from Copperheads.

Perhaps TOM was correct in claiming bad things happen in 3s. If they did, they didn't happen here. Steve and Roy never officially became 'our' boys although they lived with us until they built their own cabins, married and left home. Katy and I enjoyed recreational shooting and having the M21s and learning to reload our own ammo became a passion unto itself. We eventually developed what we called our 'Super Match' ammo using difficult to find commercial match bullets and a precise measure of powder.

I've often wondered if Jeff Storm, R. Lee Ermey and the other guy, Andy, found TOM in Flippin. If they did, then what? There's probably a story in that; I simply don't know.

Five years after Roy moved out, we moved back to our home near the border. We were there when Yellowstone finally did blow its top. It was smaller than the Mesa Falls eruption and, like the Mesa Falls eruption, covered a small area with ash...to our west. I eventually learned to avoid the Copperheads and they me. I simply don't like snakes of any kind.

We have our horses and besides the shooting sports, like to ride. We even took our 4 extra horses, loaded with packs, and made a trip south to see the Gulf of Mexico. We should have taken a covered wagon; it would have been so much easier. In our travels, we saw how much the war had changed the country. In some ways, we'd returned to our roots because of the absence of technology.

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